PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT
Blue Morning
Story and Art by Shoko Hidaka
volume 5

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Still reeling from Katsuragi's confession, Akihito attends Marquise Moriyama's evening ball. There he comes face-to-face with his late father's half-brother Naotsugu. Though Kotsuragi arranged the meeting with the intention of helping both Akihito and the Kuze family name, Akihito decides against giving the family over to Naotsugu, bringing Akihito to the unsettling realization that he may not fully trust Katsuragi. Meanwhile, Katsuragi meets with Marquise Moriyama and boldly demands recompense for all that he has done.

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SUBLIME
SuBLime Manga Edition

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憂鬱な朝
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Blue Morning: Scene 21

Characters

Soichiro Ishizaki

Akihito s close friend who also gives him painful advice al times He likes Akihito who is critical of the nobility but ll s hard for him to accept Akihito s relationship with Katsuragi

Tomoyuki Katsuragi

A very capable butler who will use any means when it comes te protecting the Kuze family Although drawn to Akihito who yearns for him wholeheartedly he left the Kuze house and is head clerk for the Ishizakis.

Akihito Kuze

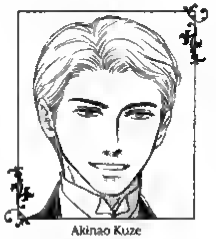
The young head of the family, having succeeded the viscountcy at the tender age of ten Straight-forward and wise, but also very determined He has loved his butler/tutor Katsuragi since childhood

Soemon Ishizaki

Soichiro s father he is a merchant who built a fortune in a generation Recognizing Katsuragi s talent, he selected him as head clerk

Takayuki Katsuragi

The head of the Katsuragi family, a Kuze branch family He despises his youngest brother Tomoyuki, but he pays Akihito the respect he is due as the head of the main family



Akinao Kuze

The former head of the Kuze family and Akihito s deceased father He took in Katsuragi who was not his legitimate child to inheni his title and gave him a special education. A very proud man, he focused mainly on family status.

Shigeyuki Saionji

The heir to a declining marquessate he adores Katsuragi and is another of his former lovers With Katsuragi's assistance he married the eldest daughter of the Moriyama house

Kayoko Moriyama

Originally from a merchant family she is now Marquise Moriyama s wife and Katsuragi s former lover

Marquise Moriyama

He s a powerful man with the most influence in noble society but his thinking is antiquated and oppressive

Story

At ten years of age, Akihito became the young head of a viscountcy. From that point on, his butler and tutor, Katsuragi, took over raising him and did so in a rather severe manner. Akihito's adoration of Katsuragi eventually changed to love. To further the family name, the butler agreed to sleep with Akihito but only on the condition that he work toward getting promoted to a higher rank. However, no matter how many liaisons they had, Akihito still couldn't come to understand Katsuragi's true motives. It was then that he discovered that Katsuragi was actually his grandfather's illegitimate child! This discovery led Katsuragi to leave the Kuze house in order to join the Ishizaki household and caused Akihito to resolve to give up his title. Akihito broke off his arranged engagement with Duke Sajo's daughter and made threats against Marquise Moriyama. Finally, knowing how far Akihito was prepared to go, Katsuragi confessed his love!

COMING FROM THIS ESTATE IN THE OLD FIEF...
...THIS YOUNG MASTER, WHO HAS NEVER EVEN ONCE BEEN TO THE TOKYO MAIN HOUSE—
HIS PREDECESSOR HID HIM AWAY, AND NOW, AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS, HE THROWS A TANTRUM AND WILL NOT LEAVE THE VILLA.
HE WAS BORN IN KAMAKURA AND RAISED IN A VILLA THERE.
...
WELL, WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO BOW MY HEAD AND WELCOME HIM HERE?
I DOUBT HE IS EVEN FIT TO BE THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
IT DOES SEEM SO.
I'LL PRETEND I DIDN'T HEAR IT.
I'VE SAID TOO MUCH.
I BORE YOU WITH BANALITIES.

KATSURAGI.
WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS YOUR MASTER AKIHITO?
...
I COULDN'T SAY.
IN THE GENERAL COURSE OF THINGS, YOU AS THE BUTLER WOULD WELCOME—
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN HIM.
THE YOUNG MASTER WILL BE RETURNING HERE TO THE MAIN KUZE ESTATE UPON THE NEW YEAR, WON'T HE?
THAT'S A RATHER ODD RESPONSE.

SHK
THEY'RE JUST RUMORS.
AND KATSURAGI, ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS I'VE HEARD STRANGE RUMORS ABOUT YOU AND THAT YOUNG MAN—
COULD SUCH A THING EVEN HAPPEN, I WONDER?
THE FAMILIES OF THE IMPERIAL COURT DISLIKE THE NEW NOBILITY AND KEEP THEIR DISTANCE.
THE IMPORTANT MATTER HERE IS THAT...
...OUR RELATION-SHIP IS COMPLETELY INNOCENT.
ALTHOUGH IT IS CERTAINLY THE CASE THAT I AM FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE QUITE CLOSE WITH MASTER SHIGEYUKI...
CHK
CHK
...
YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS, MADAM KAYOKO.
...IF MISTRESS TAKAKO IS GIVEN TO THE SAIONJI HOUSE IN MARRIAGE, HER POSITION WILL ALSO BECOME QUITE SOLID.

ABOUT THE SUCCESSION OF THIS MASTER AKIHITO TO THE PEERAGE...
I WOULD LIKE TO ASK MARQUISE MORIYAMA TO ACCOMPANY HIM AS HIS GUARDIAN WHEN HE VISITS THE IMPERIAL COURT.
PERHAPS A GOOD WORD FROM YOU?
...
INCIDENTALLY, MADAM KAYOKO...
HA
TAKAKO ?
MARRY THE HEIR TO THE SAIONJI MARQUESS-ATE?
IN EXCHANGE...
...I PROMISE I WILL BRING ABOUT AN ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN YOUR ELDEST DAUGHTER, MISTRESS TAKAKO, AND MASTER SHIGEYUKI OF THE SAIONJI HOUSE.
I SEE.
I DO WONDER WHAT MORIYAMA WILL SAY...

...I REALIZE I'M DOING THE SAME THING AS MY MOTHER.
...OR WHEN I NOTICE HOW SO MANY PEOPLE LOOK AT ME LIKE "THAT"...
EACH TIME THE NUMBER OF BARGAINS I MAKE INCREASES, MUCH LIKE MY LOVE AFFAIRS...
IRONIC.
DID MY MOTHER ALSO MAKE IT IN THIS WORLD, AMIDST THE CHAOS AFTER THE RESTORATION, LIKE THIS?
ALL ALONE...
MOST LIKELY, I WILL DIE NOT KNOWING WHO MY REAL FATHER IS, BUT MY MOTHER IS WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT WOMAN. EACH TIME I REFLECT UPON MYSELF, I AM REMINDED OF THIS.
SIMPLY WANDERING ABOUT IN A NIGHT WITH NO DAWN.
ARE YOU GOING TO THE MORIYAMAS AGAIN?
NEVER BATHED IN THE LIGHT OF MORNING...

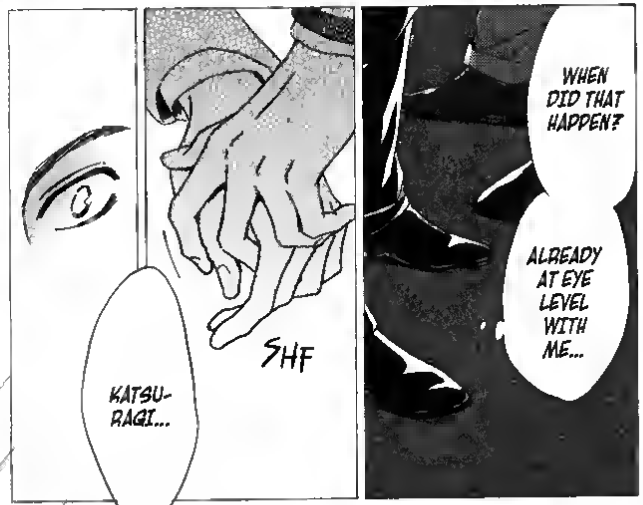
...KATSU-RAGI.
I'LL CHOOSE TO BELIEVE YOU TODAY...
SHF
I WON'T PAY ANY MIND TO THE RUMORS.
MY BIRTH MOTHER...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF WOMAN SHE WAS AND I DON'T CARE TO.
EVEN SO...

...MARQUISE MORIYAMA WELCOMES MY MEETING WITH MADAM KAYOKO.
AS HER HUSBAND, HE HAS NEVER HAD A CAUSE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT IT.
SO COULD YOU PLEASE BE A GOOD BOY AND STOP CONCERNING YOURSELF WITH MY DOINGS?
UNLIKE YOU, MY LORD, I HAVE THINGS TO DO.
WHEN HE WAS A CHILD, I DIDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT, BUT EVEN AT AGE SIXTEEN...
...HE CONTINUES TO MAKE A FUSS.
AND YET...
EVERYTHING I'VE EVER WANTED...
EVEN THOUGH SINCE THE TIME I WAS BORN I'VE HAD EVERYTHING ONE COULD WANT, SOMEHOW I'M STILL NOT SATISFIED.
IT'S SO FRUSTRATING...
...
"HE'S ALREADY A WONDERFUL YOUNG MASTER."
"WHAT SORT OF PERSON IS MASTER AKIHITO?"
"HE VERY MUCH RESEMBLES HIS LADY MOTHER, WHO IS DESCENDED FROM DISTINGUISHED COURT NOBILITY."

...
LATELY, YOU'VE BEEN GOING THERE NEARLY EVERY DAY.
IS LADY MORIYAMA WELL?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT EVERYONE IS SAYING?
I AM WELL AWARE OF IT. AND FURTHERMORE...
YES.
SHE IS IN GOOD HEALTH AS ALWAYS.
SUCH A PEST.

KATSURAGI.
TAK
...HE SIMPLY PRESSES HIS OWN FEELINGS ONTO ME.
...
ALTHOUGH HE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT ME...
HE MASTERS IT ALL SO EASILY.

...TALL.
HE'S GROWN ...


KATSU-RAGI...
SHF
ALREADY AT EYE LEVEL WITH ME...
WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN?

SNATCH

WHAT ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENTS I GAVE YOU?
IN ANY CASE...

...

"AND IT SEEMS THAT MY LORD SIMPLY ADORES HIM..."

I'M ALREADY FINISHED.
FOR WHAT PURPOSE, EXACTLY, AM I EMPLOYING ALL THESE TEACHERS—
PLEASE RETURN TO THE STUDY.

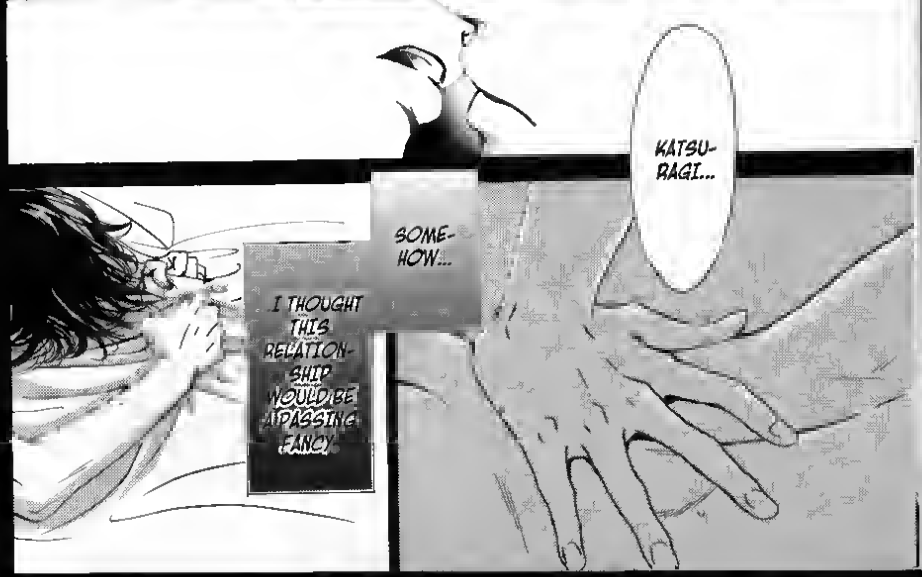
...
GERMAN IS A WEAK POINT, BUT ENGLISH ISN'T.
MY INSTRUCTOR EVEN SAID I COULD GO STUDY ABROAD AT ANY TIME.
WHAT?
THE ASSIGNMENTS. I FINISHED THEM ALL AND GAVE THEM TO MY TEACHER.
EVERY-THING.

WHEN DID HE SURPASS ME IN STATURE?
EXACTLY HOW...
...HAS SIX YEARS ALREADY PASSED?
HE LOOKS LIKE HIS LADY MOTHER?
NO...
MASTER AKIHITO'S TOO-QUICK GROWTH CONTINUED TO CONFUSE ME.
THE DISTURBANCES IN THE AIR, THE CHANGES IN THE SPACE BETWEEN US...
I FELT THEY DID NOTHING MORE THAN MAKE IT HARD FOR ME TO BREATHE.
THIS STATURE OF HIS...
HE RESEMBLES MASTER AKINAO...
...DESPITE THE FACT THAT INSIDE THEY ARE ALMOST NOTHING ALIKE...

AH...
...
YOU DISLIKE BEING TOUCHED BY ME?
GIVE MY BEST TO THE MARQUISE.
I'LL GO BACK TO MY ROOM.
...

...HE SIMPLY HUNGERED FOR THAT EASE...

I THOUGHT THAT BECAUSE HE KNEW I WAS A MAN WHO SLEPT WITH ANYONE REGARDLESS OF GENDER...



I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE TRUE NATURE OF THAT HEAT WAS.

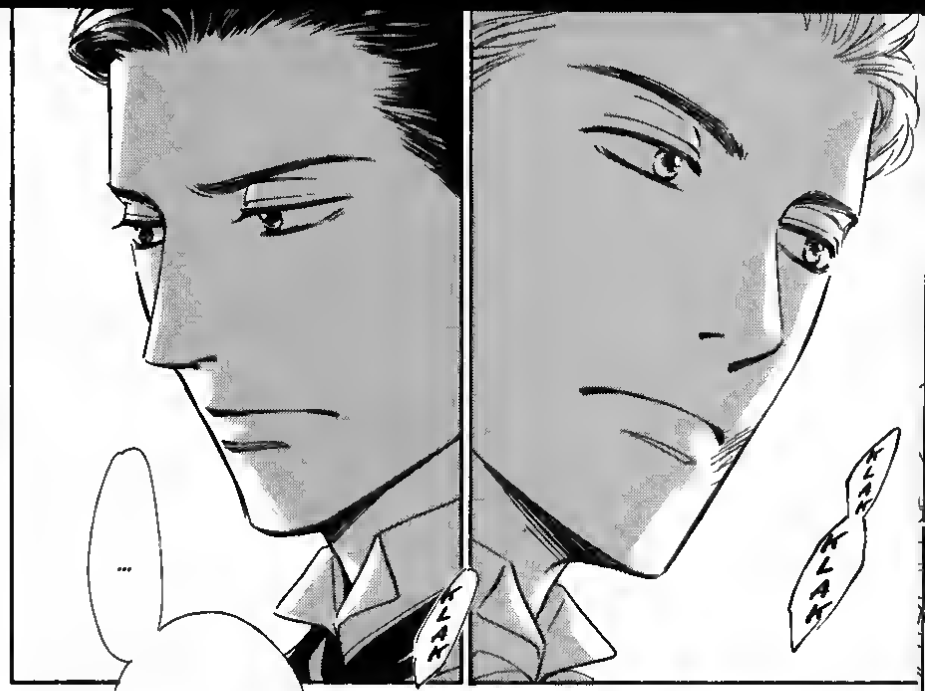
DRIVEN BY A HEAT I HAD NEVER FELT BEFORE, I BECAME UNABLE TO THINK.

EACH TIME I WAS WITH MASTER AKIHITO, I WAS LESS ABLE TO MAINTAIN MY IDEA OF MYSELF.

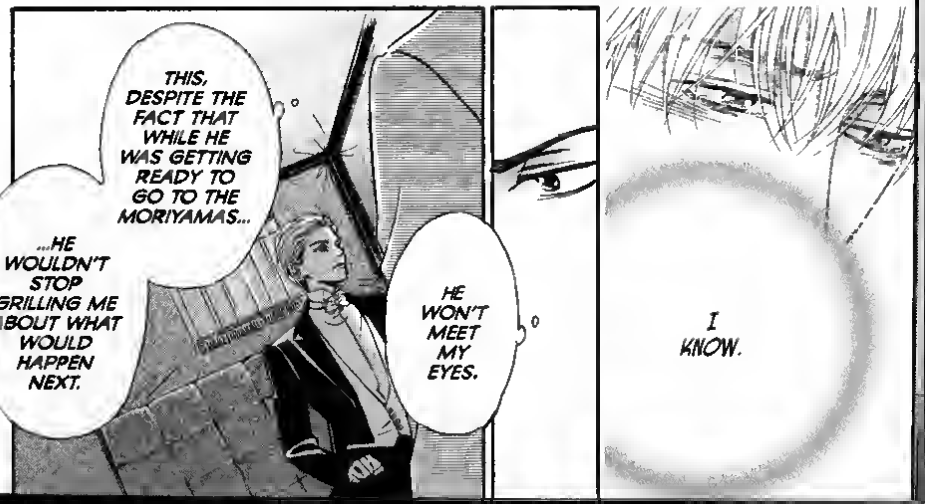
SO WAS IT A PERFORM-ANCE OR HIS TRUE FEELINGS?
HE'S ACTING AS THOUGH HE'S FORGOTTEN THAT PASSION EARLIER.
THE INSTANT WE GOT IN THE CARRIAGE, HE STOPPED TALKING.
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK

HE'S BEEN THINKING...
...ABOUT SOMETHING THIS WHOLE TIME.

IF YOU ARE INDEED GOING TO RETIRE, THEN THE INHERITANCE WILL GO TO THIS MAN.
THE OTHER IS THAT "YOUNGER HALF-BROTHER" YOUR FATHER KEPT AT A DISTANCE ALL THESE YEARS.
IF YOU HAVE THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED THE CONCUBINE REGISTRY, THEN YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE OF THIS.
I SUPPOSE I CAN'T HOPE HE WILL FOLLOW ALONG OBEDIENTLY...
PERHAPS HE'S SEARCHING FOR A FALSITY IN MY WORDS...
...

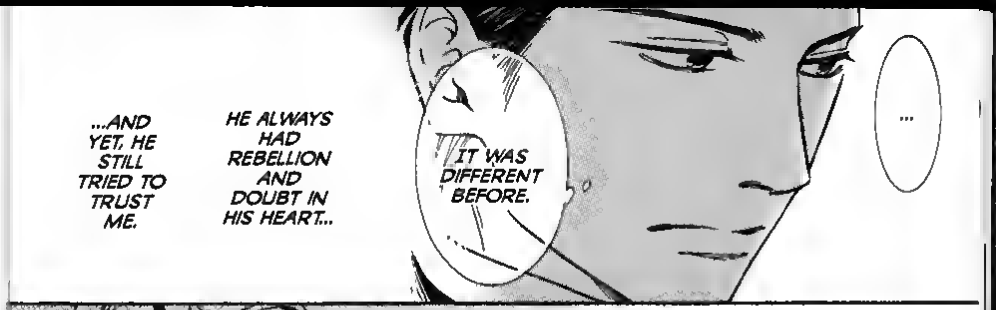

...
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK

WHAT IS HE THINKING?
I LOVE YOU.


THIS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT WHILE HE WAS GETTING READY TO GO TO THE MORIYAMAS...
...HE WOULDN'T STOP GRILLING ME ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT.
HE WON'T MEET MY EYES.
I KNOW.

...?
SINCE WE LAST WENT TO AN EVENING PARTY AT THE MORIYAMAS, THE TWO OF US TOGETHER, JUST LIKE THIS.
IT'S ALREADY BEEN A YEAR SINCE THEN.
IT HASN'T BEEN A YEAR YET.
YES...
BUT SO MANY THINGS HAVE HAPPENED...
...THAT IT ALREADY FEELS LIKE TEN YEARS.

...
KATSU-RAGI.
I REPAID ALL HIS KIND-NESSES WITH HOSTILITY ...
...LAYING OUT THE EVIDENCE OF THE ILLEGAL PEERAGE TO THE POINT WHERE HIS LORDSHIP WAS TREMBLING.
IT'S INCREDIBLE THAT I WASN'T CUT DOWN ON THE SPOT.
I BADLY INJURED MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S DIGNITY.
WHATEVER HIS TRUE MOTIVES, MARQUISE MORIYAMA DID GRANT MY WISH.
IF I RETIRE LIKE THIS...
...THE NEXT HEAD OF THE FAMILY WILL BE PROMOTED AND WILL BE GIVEN THE RANK OF COUNT.
IN OTHER WORDS ...


...
IT WAS DIFFERENT BEFORE.
...AND YET, HE STILL TRIED TO TRUST ME.
HE ALWAYS HAD REBELLION AND DOUBT IN HIS HEART...

BUT NOW-
HE STARED AT ME WITH STRONG EYES AND CHASED AFTER ME EARNESTLY.
KATSURAGI.

AH
!
IT'S BEEN A YEAR.

KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
TOO MANY.
LOT OF REPORTERS AT TONIGHT'S FUNCTION.
SLAM
...
IS IT BECAUSE YOU KNEW I WOULD FIGHT YOU?
EVER SINCE I WAS YOUNG, YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ME ANYTHING.
IS THIS ALSO YOUR DOING?
KATSURAGI.
I MERELY-
MASTER AKIHITO.

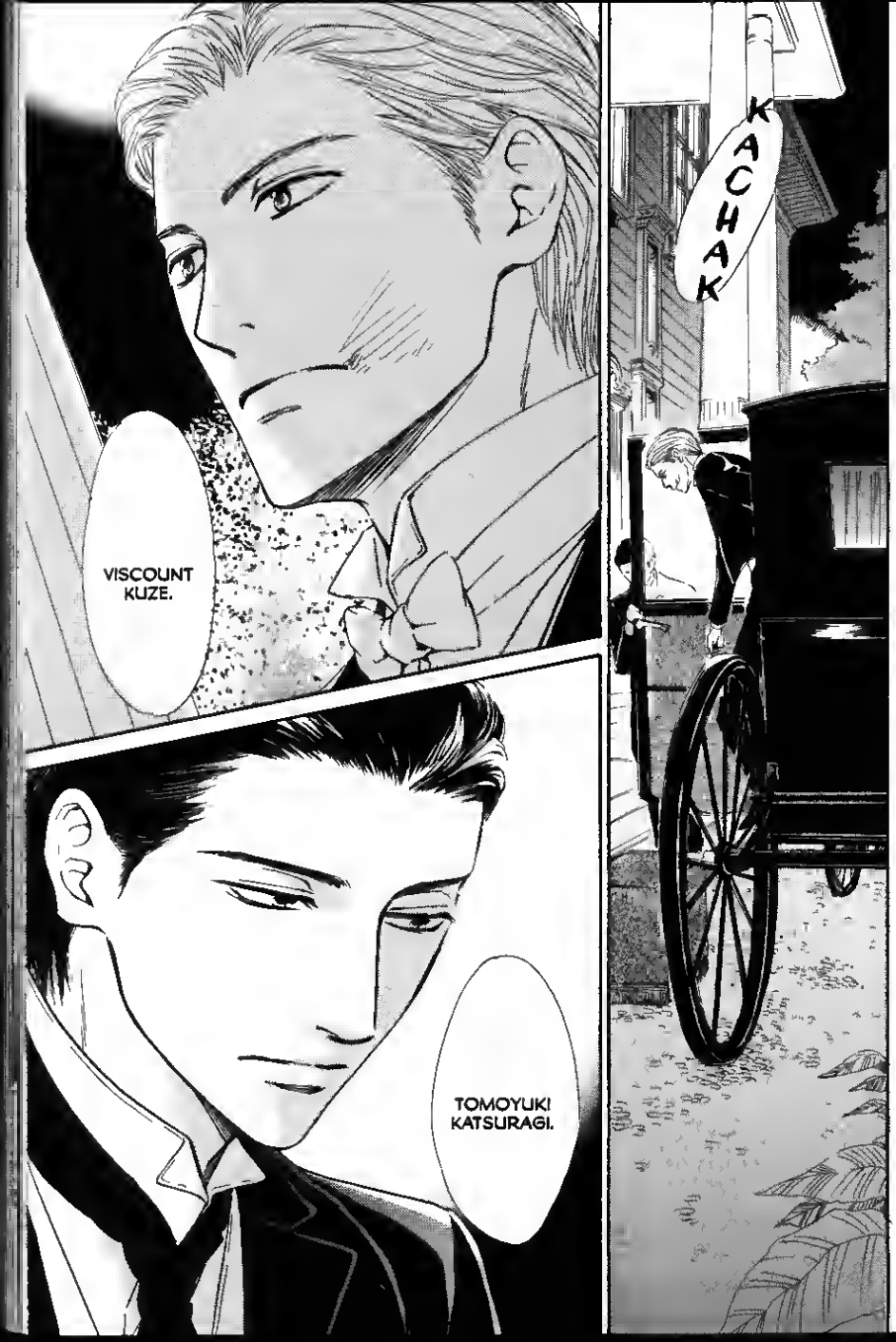
MARQUISE MORIYAMA TOLD ME HE NEVER WANTS TO SEE MY FACE AGAIN...
...I'M USELESS TO YOU NOW. YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?
...
YOU REMEMBER THE ONE? IN THE HOUSE OF ONE OF THE ISHIZAKIS' MAIDS.
...WHICH IS WHY I WAS PLANNING TO LEAVE THE KUZE HOUSE. I EVEN RENTED A ROOM.
KATSURAGI.
AT THIS POINT, JUST WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO MAKE ME DO?

I TRUST YOU.
KLATTER
!
WE'VE ARRIVED.
I MAY HURT MASTER AKIHITO AGAIN.
KATSURAGI?

...
I...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO HERE.
AND I CAN'T BELIEVE IT WILL BE EASY TO QUELL MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S ANGER.
BUT...
...I'VE GIVEN UP ON DOUBTING YOU ANYMORE.
KATSU-RAGI.

憂鬱な朝
scene.22

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? LET'S GO.
...
SQUEEZE!
OR PERHAPS THIS WILL FINALLY BE THE TIME HE COMES TO HATE ME.
EVEN STILL...
I CAN'T TURN BACK NOW.
ALL OF IT, EVERYTHING, IS FOR HIS SAKE.
AT ANY COST...
...I WILL PROTECT HIM.
Scene.22 END



憂鬱な朝

HA HA HA!
OH, THAT'S GOOD! YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY DO THAT.
AND IF WE PRINT PLENTY OF PHOTOS SHOWING HOW HANDSOME HE IS, HOUSE-WIVES'LL SNAP IT UP TOO.
YOU THINK SO TOO, RIGHT?
BUT IT'S HOPELESS.
PHOTOS EITHER.
AN ARTICLE ON THAT MAN'LL NEVER MAKE IT PAST THE BOSS!
HE'S GOT A HELLUVA NETWORK BEHIND HIM... YOU'LL DEFINITELY GET SHUT DOWN.
TAK

TOMOYUKI KATSU-RAGI?!
DID THEY REALLY COME TOGETHER IN THE KUZE CARRIAGE?
NO MISTAKE. THAT'S WHAT THE MORIYAMA SERVANT SAID.
KATSURAGI... HE'S THE HEAD CLERK AT THE ISHIZAKIS NOW, ISN'T HE?
SO WHICH POSITION GOT HIM TONIGHT'S INVITE?
THIRD SON OF THE KATSURAGIS, THE KUZE BUTLER, AND NOW A CLERK WITH THE ISHIZAKIS!
YOU GOTTA JUST STAND BACK AND WATCH HOW FAST HE'S MOVING AROUND.
"WHO EXACTLY IS TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI?" WITH THAT ANGLE, OUR PAPER CAN COVER ALL THREE POSITIONS.

SHF
YANK
IT'S TOO LATE TO WORRY ABOUT APPEARANCES.
AFTER ALL, JUST MY BEING HERE AT THE MORIYAMAS IS STRANGE IN AND OF ITSELF.
MASTER AKIHITO.
THERE ARE LIMITS EVEN TO STUBBORNNESS.
I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE MADE YOU CHANGE!

THE ANGER CURRENTLY DIRECTED ONLY AT ME WILL SPREAD TO YOU AS WELL.
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN MARQUISE MORIYAMA SEES ME HERE.
I TOLD YOU BEFORE. I'M IN NO POSITION TO BE INVITED TO THE MORIYAMAS NOW.

I'LL DO MY BEST NOT TO FIGHT YOU ON IT, SO TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.
DON'T TAKE IT ALL UPON YOURSELF.

TAK
TAK
TAK

DON'T WALK BEHIND ME. COME UP BESIDE ME.
WE CAN'T TALK LIKE THIS.

MASTER AKIHITO?
KATSURAGI..
SIGH
FREEZE

...

IF ANYONE SEES ME WALKING ALONGSIDE YOU IN THIS OUTFIT, DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'LL SAY?
ALTHOUGH I HAVE ENTERED THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE, I AM, EVEN NOW, YOUR SERVANT.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF SHOWING MY FACE AT THIS PARTY THIS EVENING, EITHER.

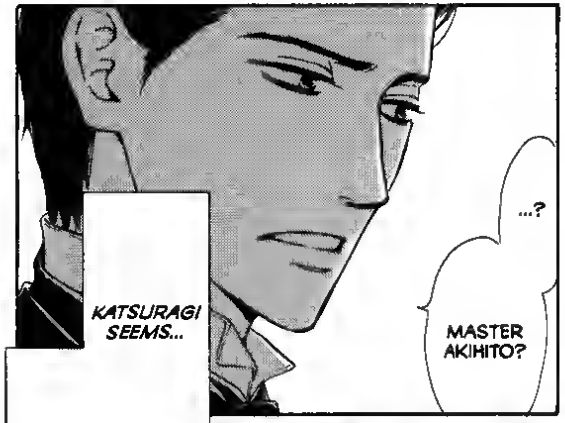
...
HOW MANY TIMES MUST I SAY IT BEFORE YOU UNDERSTAND?

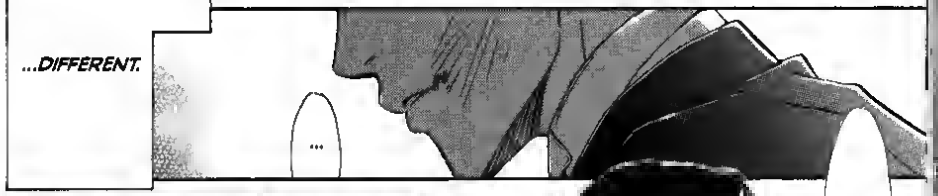
I'VE MEMORIZED THE LOCATIONS OF ALL THE ROOMS WITHIN THE MANOR.
I'VE BEEN TO THE MORIYAMA HOUSE MANY TIMES...
THIS ROOM-
SLAM
WHAT IS THIS?
BUT IT'S NOT CURRENTLY IN USE.
APPARENTLY IT WAS FORMERLY THE STEWARD'S WAITING ROOM.
SO WHAT IS THIS PLACE? IT STINKS OF MOLD...
...WHILE STANDING IN THE HALLWAY, NOW CAN WE?
WE CAN'T EXACTLY DISCUSS OPPOSING MARQUISE MORIYAMA...

KATSURAGI?
?
FWP
FINE...
WHAT'S-
SSP
...
HM?
YANK
!
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
?!
HEY-
KACHAK
KREE

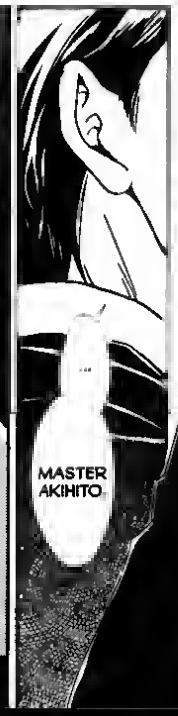
...
WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME...
I KNOW.
JUST FOR A MOMENT...
...
I GET IT. IT'S HIS EYES
SO MUCH GENTLER THAN THEY'VE EVER BEEN BEFORE

SO KATSURAGI...
...IS THE KIND OF MAN WHO CAN LOOK AT OTHERS LIKE THIS WITH WARMTH...


KATSURAGI SEEMS...
...?
MASTER AKIHITO?


...DIFFERENT.
...

WHAT IS IT...
IS IT HIS VOICE? OR...


...
MASTER AKIHITO.

...
SQUEEZE

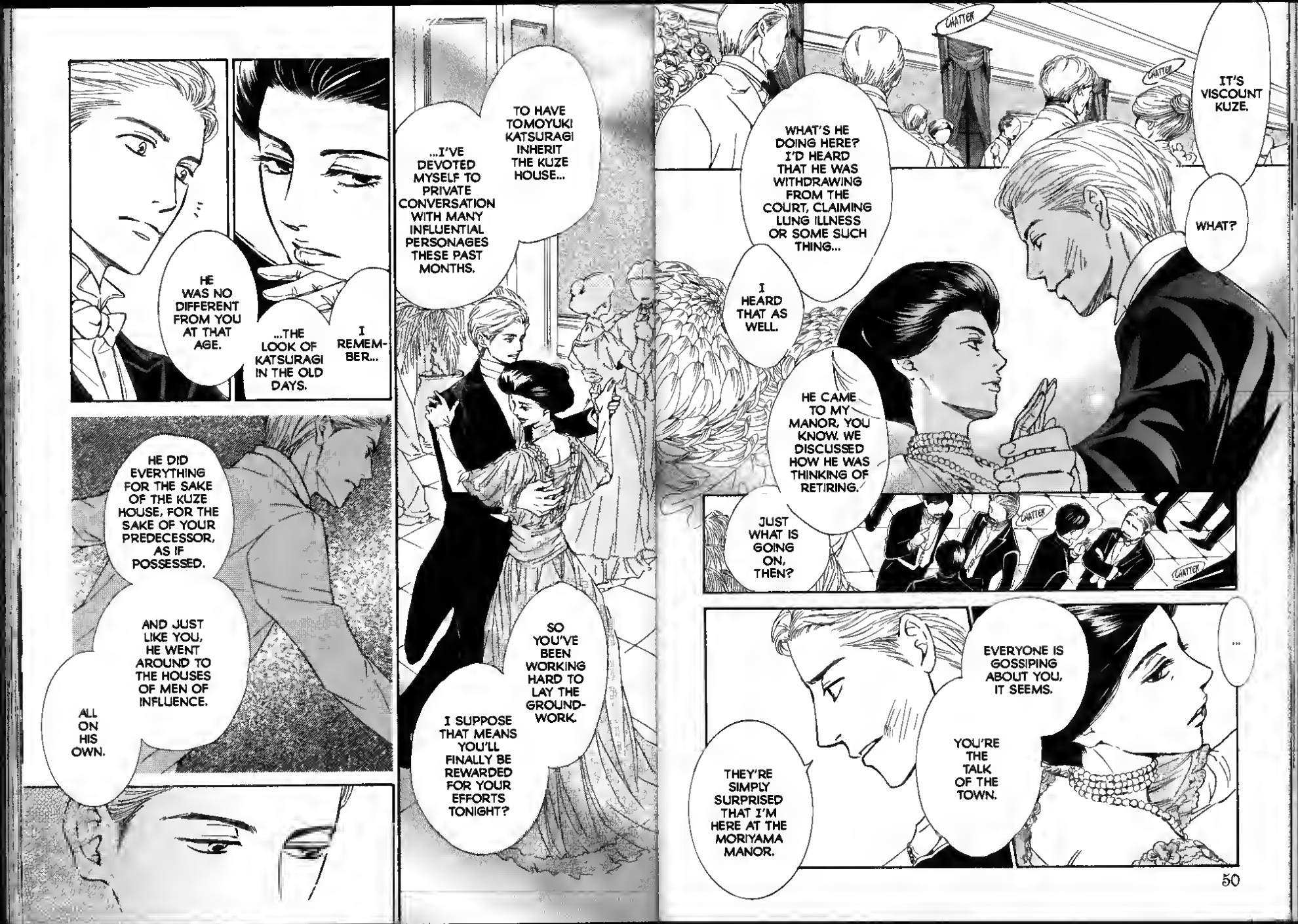
TONIGHT'S INVITATION WAS THROUGH THE KIND COURTESY OF MADAM KAYOKO.
LADY MORI-YAMA?
NOW YOU PULL AWAY?
SHE LAUGHED ...
...POINTING OUT THAT YOU HAD ASKED HER THE VERY SAME FAVOR A YEAR AGO.
IN ANY CASE...
...I INTENDED TO HAVE MADAM KAYOKO TELL YOU EVERYTHING ABOUT MY PLAN ONLY AFTERWARD, BUT...
...
KATSURAGI.
...
MM...
JUST A BIT LONGER ...
HUG
SQUEEZE
SQUEEZE
...
MASTER AKIHITO.
THE TIME...

UNTIL NOW, ALL I'VE EVER FELT FROM KATSURAGI...
...AFTER I TOLD HIM THAT I TRUST HIM.
GENTLE EYES, LOOKING STRAIGHT AT ME..
...
KATSU-RAGI...
...AND NOTHING ELSE.
...HAS BEEN ANGER OR CONFUSION..
HE'S CHANGED...
I'LL...
...TELL YOU EVERY-THING NOW.
KATSURAGI'S EYES.

LADY KAYO-KO ...
IS HE FINALLY MAKING HIS APPEAR-ANCE?
MURMUR
WHISPER
WHAT?! AS A REPRE-SENTATIVE OF THE ISHIZAKIS?!
WHISPER
THAT SAID...
IT'S RARE FOR KATSURAGI TO BE LATE...
SAIONJI.
YES?
I'M STEPPING OUT TO MEET A VISITOR. TAKE CARE OF THINGS IN HERE.
AFTER ALL, YOU ARE THE STAR OF TODAY'S SHOW.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID YOU WANTED TO HAVE AN EVENING PARTY
YES, SIR.
...
ALWAYS THE SAME OLD CHATTER.
SUCH TRIVI-ALITY.
WA! HA! HA!
HM?
YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY TO DISTURB YOU MID CONVER-SATION.
I HAVE QUITE AN URGENT MATTER TO DISCUSS...
HOHOHO
OHOHO
WA HA HA
YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY CORRECT!
WITHOUT THE MORIYAMA HOUSE, THIS NEW CONCEPT OF "NOBILITY" WOULD NOT HAVE COME ABOUT.
AND WE WOULDN'T HAVE DECIDED ON THE INTERNAL RULES GOVERNING THE FIVE RANKS EITHER!
I DO BELIEVE THIS SYSTEM UNITING THE NOBLE AND SAMURAI FAMILIES ALL UNDER THE CONTROL OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS OF SERIOUS SIGNIFICANCE.
WA HA HA

...
GOOD-NESS.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, VISCOUNT KUZE.
MY APOLOGIES FOR BEING OUT OF TOUCH.
...
PERHAPS I'M BEING A BIT FORWARD, MY LADY.
BUT WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO DANCE WITH ME?
I REALLY AM TERRIBLY SORRY.
AND YOU'RE LATE. I WAS WORRIED THAT SOMETHING UNTOWARD MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED.
CHATTER
WELL, TAKE A LOOK AT THAT.
WITH PLEASURE.

TAK TAK
TAK TAK
...
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.
WHISPER
LADY KAYO-KO?
TAK
MY LADY MARQUISE.
TWENTY YEARS SINCE I MARRIED INTO THE HOUSE OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
SUCH A LONG TIME, IT ASTOUNDS ONE...


I REMEMBER...
...THE LOOK OF KATSURAGI IN THE OLD DAYS.
HE WAS NO DIFFERENT FROM YOU AT THAT AGE.
HE DID EVERYTHING FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE HOUSE, FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR PREDECESSOR, AS IF POSSESSED.
AND JUST LIKE YOU, HE WENT AROUND TO THE HOUSES OF MEN OF INFLUENCE.
ALL ON HIS OWN.
...I'VE DEVOTED MYSELF TO PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH MANY INFLUENTIAL PERSONAGES THESE PAST MONTHS.
TO HAVE TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI INHERIT THE KUZE HOUSE...
SO YOU'VE BEEN WORKING HARD TO LAY THE GROUND-WORK.
I SUPPOSE THAT MEANS YOU'LL FINALLY BE REWARDED FOR YOUR EFFORTS TONIGHT?
CHATTER
IT'S VISCOUNT KUZE.
WHAT?
WHAT'S HE DOING HERE? I'D HEARD THAT HE WAS WITHDRAWING FROM THE COURT, CLAIMING LUNG ILLNESS OR SOME SUCH THING...
I HEARD THAT AS WELL.
HE CAME TO MY MANOR, YOU KNOW. WE DISCUSSED HOW HE WAS THINKING OF RETIRING.
JUST WHAT IS GOING ON, THEN?
...
EVERYONE IS GOSSIPING ABOUT YOU, IT SEEMS.
YOU'RE THE TALK OF THE TOWN.
THEY'RE SIMPLY SURPRISED THAT I'M HERE AT THE MORIYAMA MANOR.

LORD AKIHITO.
DO YOU SERI-OUSLY ...
...INTEND TO LEAVE THE KUZE HOUSE?
WHAT ?
IF THE KUZE NAME...
...IS TAKEN FROM YOU, WHAT REMAINS, LORD AKIHITO?
YOU'RE STILL JUST A CHILD, AFTER ALL.
LORD AKIHITO... YOU WERE PLANNING TO RETIRE FOR KATSURAGI, WEREN'T YOU?
AND YET HERE YOU ARE DOING JUST AS KATSURAGI HAD INTENDED.

...THAT ALSO ENDS TODAY.
BUT...
I WON'T ALLOW...
...KATSURAGI TO BE ALONE ANY LONGER.
...
I SEE.

LADY MORIYAMA-
LORD AKIHITO.
IF YOU REALLY DO CHERISH KATSURAGI...
...PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST...
...IF YOU ALLOWED ME TO PROCEED WITH DISCUSSIONS FOR YOU TO STUDY ABROAD IN ENGLAND?
...!

NOT A SINGLE THING HAS CHANGED FROM A YEAR AGO.
DO YOU PLAN TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE LIVING UNDER KATSURAGI'S PATRONAGE?
...THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND KATSURAGI, THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE KUZE HOUSE...
...THE DOINGS OF OTHER HOUSES... NONE OF IT IS OF ANY CONCERN TO ME.
BUT...
...
TO BE COMPLETELY HONEST...
...TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI IS SPECIAL.
HE SAVED ME FROM THIS HOUSE. I OWE HIM MY LIFE.
WHICH IS EXACTLY WHY I DON'T WANT HIM TO MAKE ANOTHER MISTAKE IN HOW HE LIVES HIS OWN LIFE.

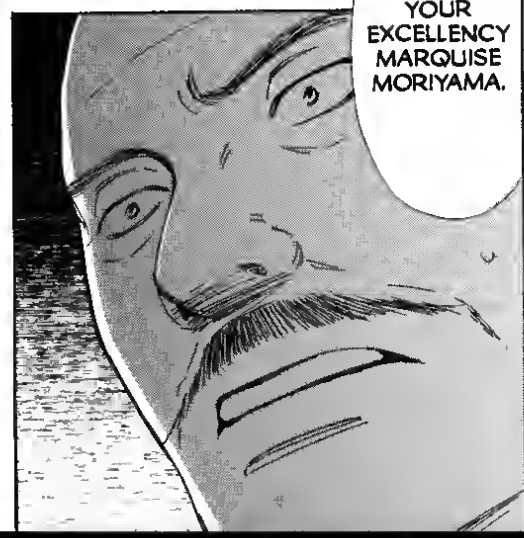
I AM HONORED TO ATTEND THIS EVENING AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE.
YOU ARE CORRECT, YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.
I HEAR YOU'RE SERVING THE ISHIZAKIS NOW?
RAP
RAP
RAP
RAP
RAP
KATSURAGI.
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
KATSU-RAGI...

THERE ARE LIMITS TO YOUR INSO-LENCE!
KATSU-RAGI!
BAM!
DO YOU WANT YOUR ASSETS STRIPPED FROM YOU LIKE AKIHITO KUZE?!
IF YOU WISH TO SUCCEED THE KUZE NAME, THEN YOU WILL-
I COULD CARE LESS...
...ABOUT SUCH A THING NOW.

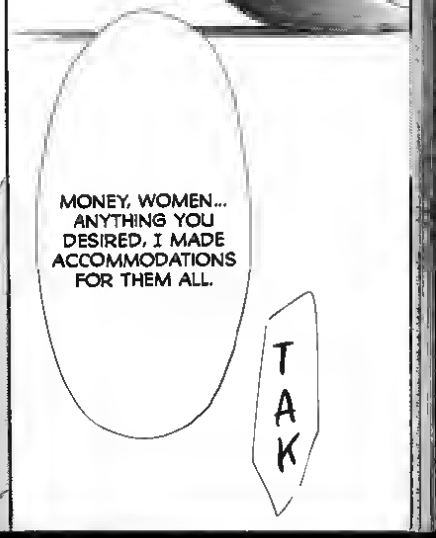
HAVE YOU FOR-GOTTEN?
YOU AND I ABSOLUTELY DO NOT MEET IN PUBLIC.
PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS ARE TO PASS THROUGH KAYOKO.
FOR WHAT PURPOSE ARE YOU USING THE ISHIZAKI NAME?
YOU'RE TO BE THE MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE, AREN'T YOU?!
I'M BUSY. I HAVE NO INTENTION OF INVOLVING MYSELF IN THE DOMESTIC SQUABBLES OF A MERE VISCOUNTCY-
I KNEW THAT I WOULD BE ABLE TO MEET WITH YOU IF I PUT FORTH THE ISHIZAKI NAME.
YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THE INFLUENCE OF THEIR HOUSE.
...HAVE THOSE OLD EYES OF YOURS FINALLY COME TO SEE THE TIMES AS THEY ARE?
ALTHOUGH YOU DISDAIN SUCH NOUVEAU RICHE MERCHANTS AS BENEATH YOU...
!

TODAY, I HAVE COME TO RECEIVE MY COMPENSATION.

TAK


YOUR EXCELLENCY MARQUISE MORIYAMA.

TAK
YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.
YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW HARD I WORKED ON YOUR BEHALF
WH...
TAK


MONEY, WOMEN... ANYTHING YOU DESIRED, I MADE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THEM ALL.
TAK

STILL...
...
IS IT THAT MAN OVER THERE?
IN-DEED, SIR.
...I CAN'T BELIEVE I'VE BEEN DRAGGED INTO A SQUABBLE SUCH AS THIS.
I'VE HAD A LONG ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE KUZE HOUSE, AND YET...
QUITE SO...
TAK

I'M TERRIBLY SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING...
...PRESIDENT KATSURAGI.
WELL!
LORD SAION-JI!
I DO APOLOGIZE FOR THE DEEP INCONVE-NIENCE MY FOOL OF A BROTHER HAS-
FOOL OF A BROTHER -?
NOT AT ALL...

憂鬱な朝
scene.23

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN HIM.
MASTER NAOTSUGU KUZE.

scene.22END

...MORE SUITABLE FOR THE KUZE HOUSE.
...THOSE WORDS WERE THE START OF EVERYTHING.
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...
THE ABSOLUTE POWER OF THOSE WORDS...
SAVED ME AND THEN BOUND ME
...
SUCH AN ODD THING...

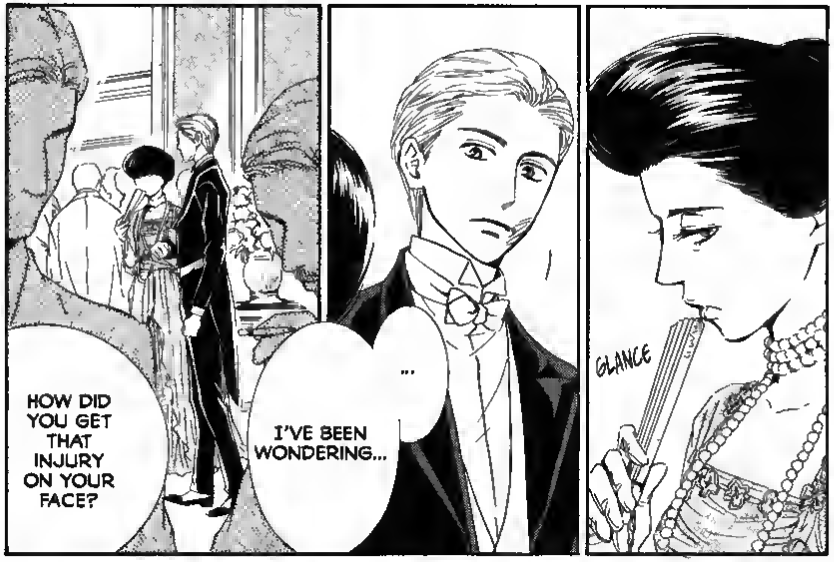
UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES DOES HE WANT THAT MAN TO INHERIT THE MAIN KUZE FAMILY.
LORD KUZE AND HIS HATRED OF CONCUBINES...
WELL, HE HATES HIS ILLEGITIMATE YOUNGER BROTHER WITH A PASSION.
NAOTSUGU KUZE.
WHICH IS EXACTLY WHY HE TOOK YOU IN FROM THE BRANCH FAMILY, MASTER TOMOYUKI.
I'M NOT TOO FUSSY ABOUT MATRILINE'L LINEAGE AND SUCH THINGS.
LORD AKINAO LOATHED HIM AND KEPT HIM AT A DISTANCE.
BUT RATHER THAN A YOUNGER BROTHER BORN FROM SOME UNKNOWN WOMAN'S STOMACH, YOU ARE FAR AND AWAY...

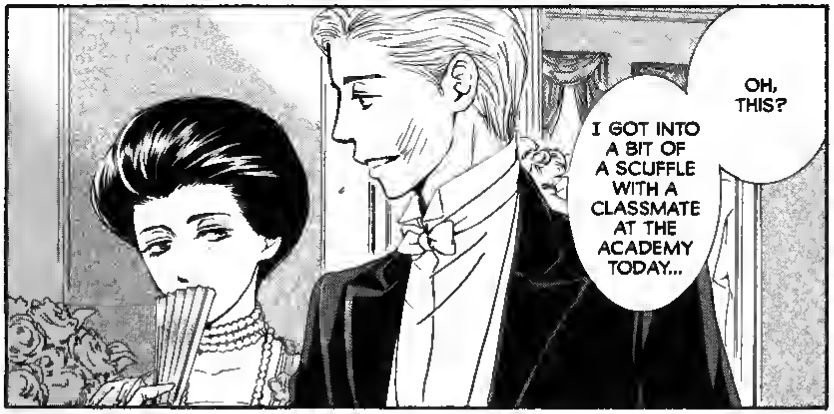
...
JUST AS THE WORD IMPLIES.
I'LL ASK YOU ONE MORE TIME.
AND FOR AN INSIGNIFICANT LITTLE NOBLE LIKE KUZE!
I HAVE GIVEN YOU PLENTY OF COMPEN-SATION!
UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, PROMOTION WOULDN'T EVEN BE POSSIBLE!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "COMPEN-SATION"?
AND YET I-

KATSURAGI.
...SEEMS SO FAR AWAY.
NOW, STANDING HERE, IT ALL...
FROM NOW ON, YOU MUST OFFER MASTER AKIHITO SUPPORT IN YOUR OWN WAY.
THE ORDERS YOUR FORMER MASTER LEFT MUST HAVE RUSTED AFTER ALL THIS TIME. I CAN'T IMAGINE THEY ARE EASY TO OBEY.
HAVING COME THIS FAR, I SEE HOW FOOLISH I WAS.
YOU WERE EXACTLY RIGHT.
MADAM KAYO-KO...
...
KATSURAGI.

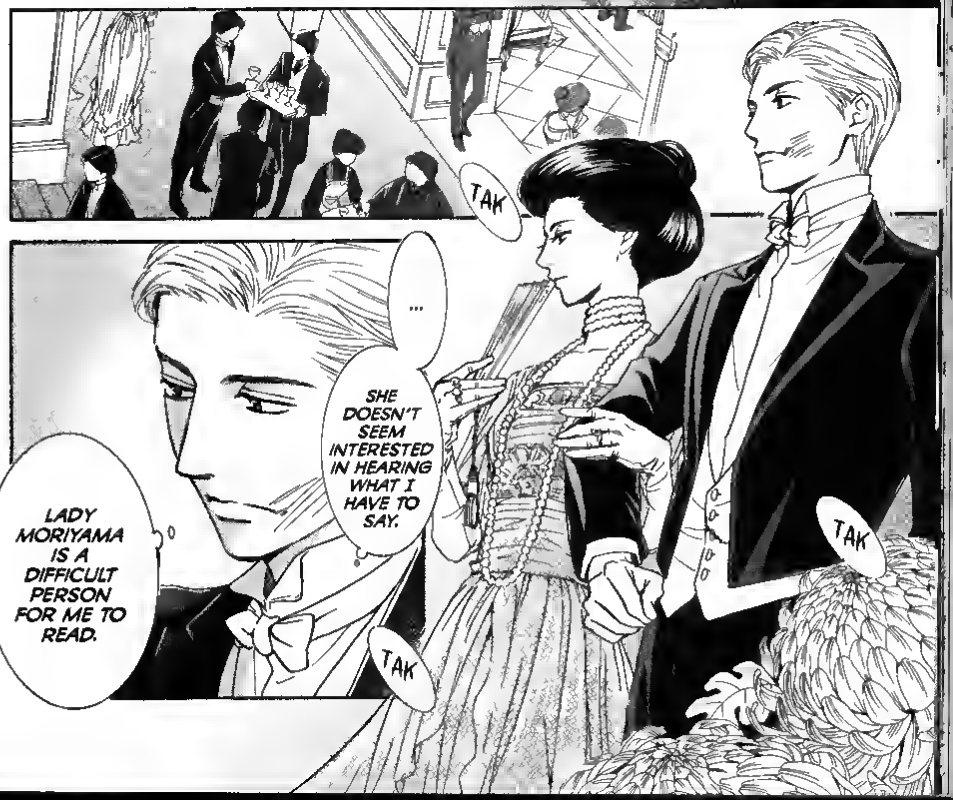
YOUR EXCELLENCY.
WHAT I SEEK TO RECEIVE IS A DIFFERENT REWARD.
DAMN YOU...
DO YOU HAVE A DEATH WISH?
YOU HAVE QUITE THE NERVE TALKING TO ME LIKE THAT...
QUITE THE NERVE!
YOU DARE TO...

BAM
YOUR EXCELLENCY!
WAS THAT NOT THE "REWARD" PROVIDED AFTER MASTER AKIHITO THREATENED YOU?
THE PROMOTION OF THE KUZE HOUSE THAT MASTER AKIHITO RISKED EVERYTHING TO ESTABLISH!
THAT LIVES IN AND OF ITSELF!
I'LL HAVE YOU KEEP THAT PLEDGE NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.
I'M SURE EVEN THAT THICK HEAD OF YOURS UNDERSTANDS WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU BREAK YOUR WORD.



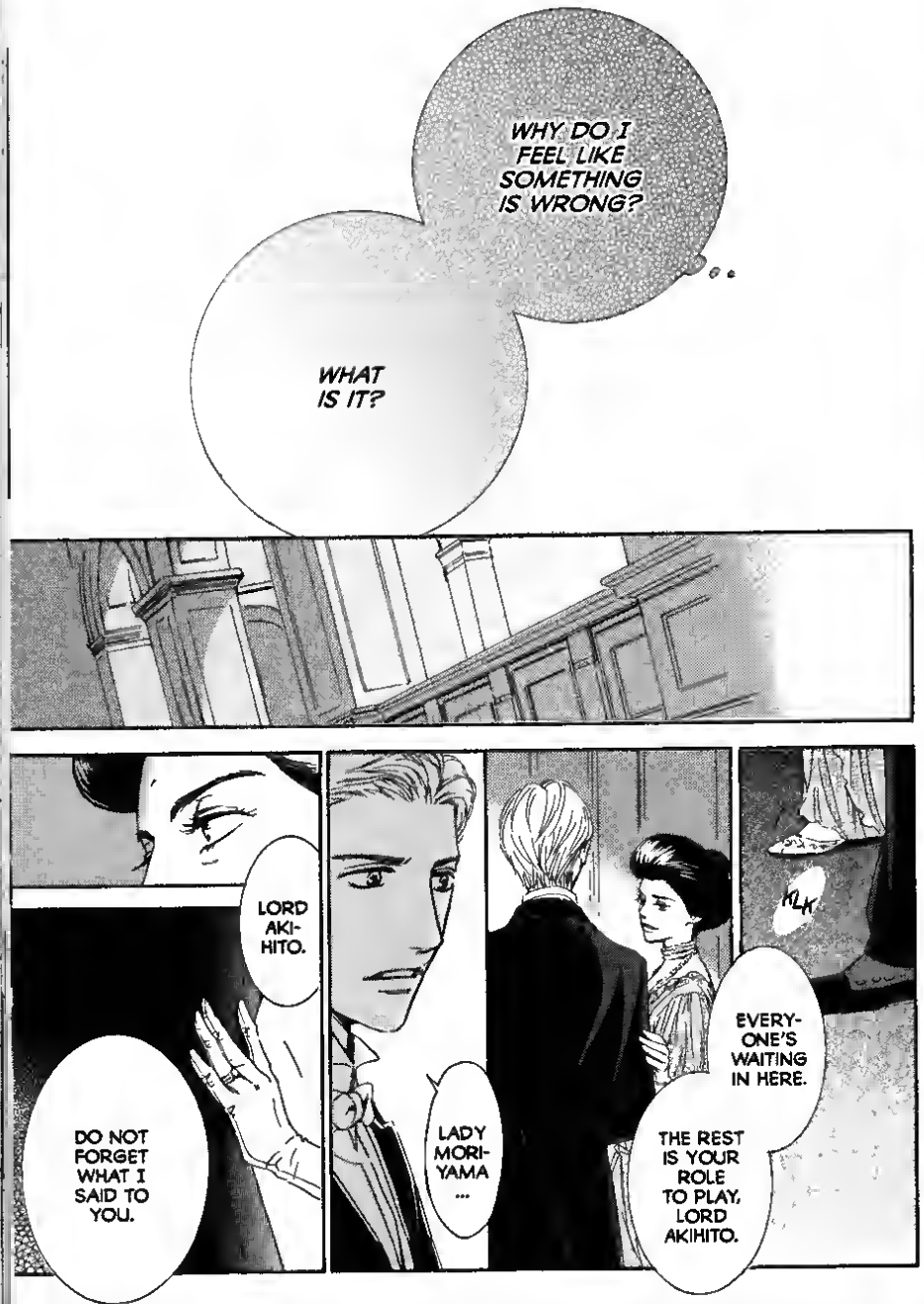


...LOOK AT ME THE SAME WAY AKINAO KUZE DID.



ARE YOU SERIOUS?
TAKAYUKI DID?
BUT THERE'S ONE PROBLEM.
MASTER NAOTSUGU HAS A DEEP AND ABIDING HATRED OF ME...
MY BROTHER FOUND MASTER NAOTSUGU FOR ME, WHOSE WHEREABOUTS HAD BEEN UNKNOWN AFTER YOUR PREDECESSOR BROKE OFF TIES.
DEBUT?
TODAY? REALLY?
REGARDING THE PARTY THIS EVENING..
ON THE SURFACE, IT'S TO CELEBRATE LADY TAKAKO'S PREGNANCY AFTER MARRYING INTO THE SAIONJI FAMILY.
BUT INSTEAD, YOU SHOULD THINK OF IT AS THE DEBUT OF THE NEXT HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
HOWEVER, NOW...
IT'S ONLY NATURAL. HAVING EMULATED YOUR PREDECESSOR, I KEPT MASTER NAOTSUGU AT A DISTANCE AND TREATED HIM WITH A SILENT CONTEMPT.
...AND DOES NOT TRUST WHAT I SAY.

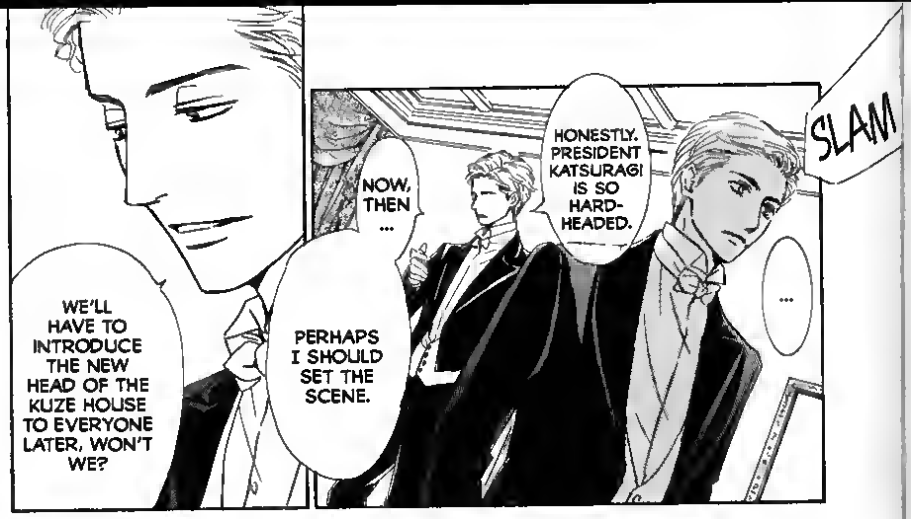
I'LL APOLOGIZE THE NEXT TIME I SEE HIM.
...
I SAID THE MOST HORRIBLE THINGS. I EVEN BROUGHT UP KOFUSA.
DON'T LASH OUT AT ME!
CHATTER
CHATTER
SO MANY THINGS ARE HAPPENING SO QUICKLY.
MY JAW STILL HURTS WHERE HE HIT ME.
NOT EVEN HALF A DAY HAS PASSED SINCE THEN.
I HAVEN'T HAD ANY TIME TO REFLECT ON...
...WHAT KATSURAGI'S CONFESSION MEANT.
MASTER AKIHITO.


WHY DO I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING IS WRONG?
WHAT IS IT?
LORD AKI-HITO.
DO NOT FORGET WHAT I SAID TO YOU.
LADY MORI-YAMA ...
EVERY-ONE'S WAITING IN HERE.
THE REST IS YOUR ROLE TO PLAY, LORD AKIHITO.
KLK

MASTER AKIHITO.
PLEASE TRUST ME.
IF IT'S YOU, I'M SURE HE'LL—
...THAT MAN IS THE KEY TO PROTECTING THE KUZE HOUSE.
...
I FEEL LIKE THERE'S NO JOY GREATER THAN THIS, AND YET...
THEY ALL MAKE ME SO HAPPY I COULD CRY.
THE CHANGE IN KATSURAGI... HIS FEELINGS... THOSE WORDS...

SO THEN...
KREEK
...!
...THAT MAN MUST BE...
...NAOTSUGU KUZE.
KA-CHAK
...
TAKAYUKI KATSURAGI AND LORD SHIGEYUKI SAIONJI....
THAT'S A SURPRISE. ARE THE TWO OF THEM REALLY IN AGREEMENT WITH KATSURAGI?
AND HOW DID LORD SHIGEYUKI BRING THE STUBBORN TAKAYUKI AROUND?

MY LORD.
THIS WAY, IF YOU WILL.
...
MY FATHER'S HALF-BROTHER, THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF MY GRANDFATHER...
KATSURAGI CALLED HIM HERE TO BECOME THE NEXT HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
IT WAS QUITE THE ORDEAL TO INVITE MASTER NAOTSUGU HERE.
HE WAS CONTINUALLY MOVING FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT.
SO THE RUMOR THAT HE'S SICKLY IS TRUE...
HE'S INCREDIBLY QUIET, SAYING ALMOST NOTHING.
EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS HE?
PLEASE DO NOT MISUNDERSTAND THE SITUATION.
EVEN THOUGH I RECEIVED NO REPLY DESPITE HOW MANY LETTERS I SENT ABOUT THE "COPY."
...COOPERATED WITH TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI, I SEE.
YOU'VE...
SMILE
...
LORD SHIGEYUKI.
YOU MUST REALIZE THAT...
...THIS DOES NOT MEAN I HAVE JOINED FORCES WITH TOMOYUKI!
I AM HERE ONLY BECAUSE THE KATSURAGI MAIN FAMILY STANDS TO GAIN A GREAT DEAL-
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?
YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU? KATSURAGI HAS DONE SO MANY THINGS FOR ME.
I WOULD DO WHATEVER HE ASKS.
THE SAME AS YOU.
YOU AND I HAVE ALSO BEEN THROUGH A NUMBER OF THINGS. I WOULD EXPECT YOU TO DOUBT ME.
WELL.
...
YOUR FACE SAYS YOU DON'T TRUST ME.


WE'LL HAVE TO INTRODUCE THE NEW HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE TO EVERYONE LATER, WON'T WE?
PERHAPS I SHOULD SET THE SCENE.
NOW, THEN ...
HONESTLY. PRESIDENT KATSURAGI IS SO HARD-HEADED.
SLAM
...

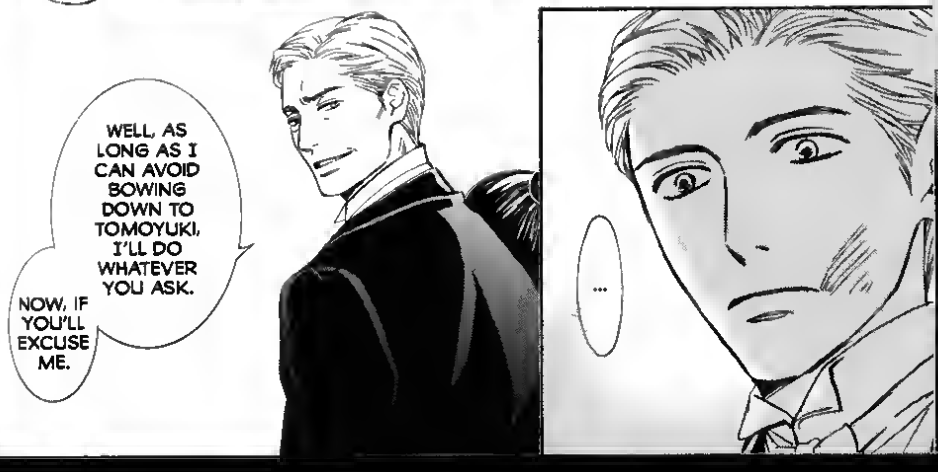
WHICH IS WHY IT'S BEST TO SIMPLY TRUST AND FOLLOW HIM.
AND HE'S NOT WRONG, YOU KNOW.
THERE'S NOTHING EASIER.
I AM COMPLETELY WILLING...
...TO HELP OUT WITH KATSURAGI'S SCHEMES.

KATSURAGI... THAT DAY...

...VISCOUNT KUZE?
DON'T YOU THINK YOU'VE BEEN TRULY BLESSED...
JUST THINK, FROM THE TIME YOU WERE A CHILD YOU'VE HAD A MAN LIKE HIM BY YOUR SIDE.

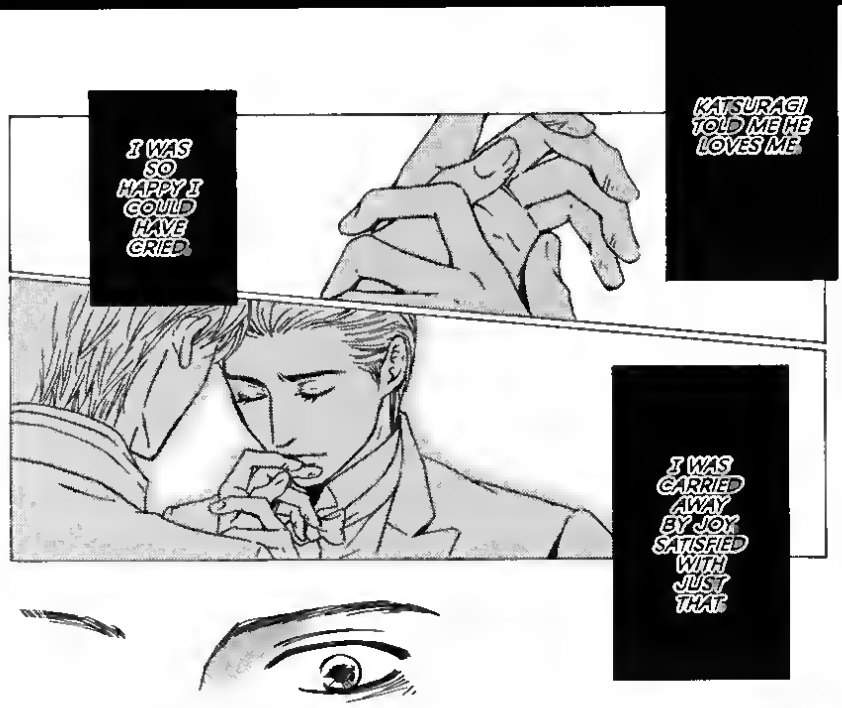
INCIDENTALLY, LORD KUZE.
BUT WOULD HE HELP JUST FOR THAT?
IS THAT IT? AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MINISTER?
PRESIDENT KATSURAGI... SHALL WE ADJOURN TO THE BANQUET HALL?
AS PROMISED, I SHALL INTRODUCE YOU TO THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE, MAKINO.
WHY ...
...WITH PLEASURE.
WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO ESCORT ME THAT FAR?

I HAD COME TO APPROVE OF YOU AS THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
...IT SEEMS A SHAME TO PUT AN END TO IT WHEN YOU WERE FINALLY IN THE RIGHT MIND TO LEAD IT.
I DO NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOUR THINKING IS ON THE KUZE MAIN FAMILY, BUT...

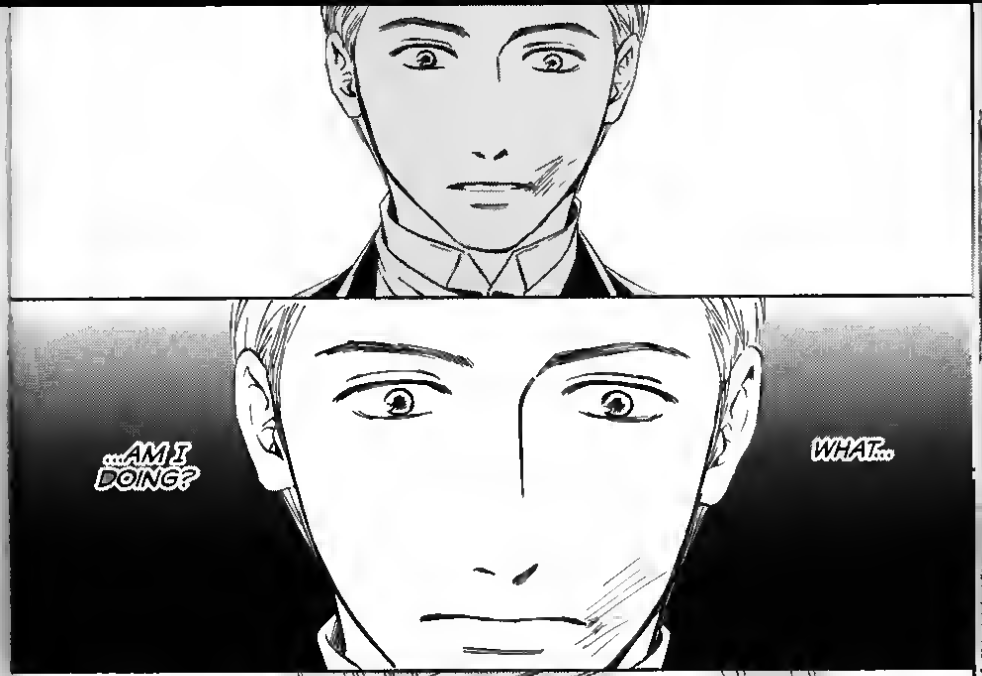

NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
WELL, AS LONG AS I CAN AVOID BOWING DOWN TO TOMOYUKI, I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU ASK.
...

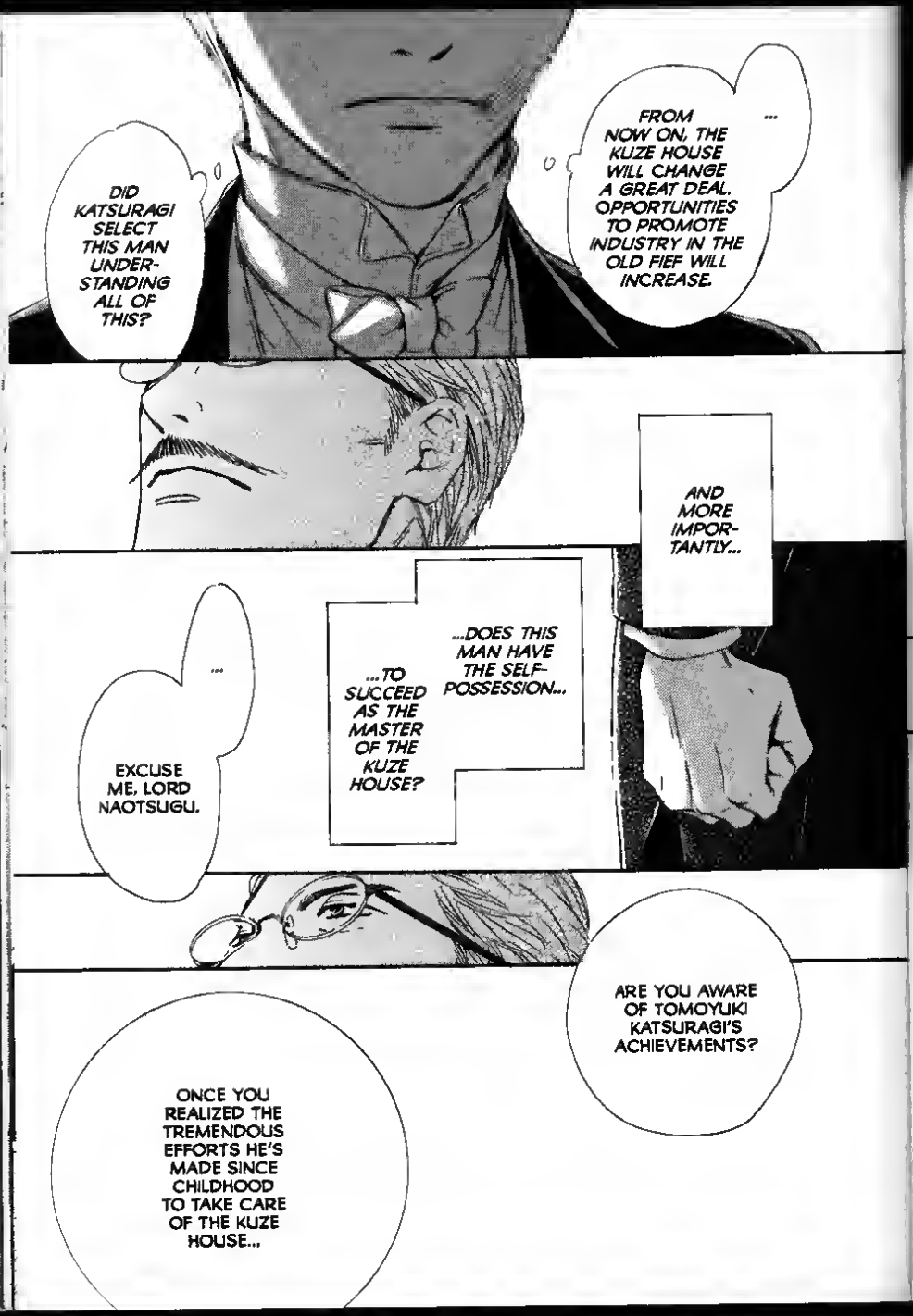
"THERE'S NOTHING ..."
...EASIER"?
...
IF I START THINKING, I'M SURE TO–
IT'S BETTER NOT TO THINK.
I'VE APPLIED TO THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT FOR A CHANGE TO THE FAMILY CONSTITUTION. TO HAVE YOU RESTORED IN THE REGISTER OF THE MAIN KUZE FAMILY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
MASTER NAO-TSUGU.
PLEASE SIT DOWN.
...
STOP
DOUBT-ING.
...
ALTHOUGH THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN CHANGE THE FAMILY CONSTITUTION IS ME, AS THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE...
...WITH REGARD TO ANY OTHER MATTER, IF YOU LEAVE IT TO KATSURAGI, IT WILL ALL GO WELL.

DID HE FEEL THE SAME WAY AS I DO NOW?
...PERPLEXED BY THE PLAN AND MY TALK OF RETIRING, WHICH HAD BEEN PROCEEDING WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE.
AND ON THAT DAY, HE APPEARED IN THAT SMALL RENTED ROOM...
HE WAS SO ANGRY.
THAT IS EVERY-THING.
OUT OF NOWHERE, KATSURAGI SAID WHAT I WANTED HIM TO SAY.
TO BE HONEST, I'M STILL CONFUSED.
...JUST LIKE IN THE PAST...
HIS CONFIDENT WORDS FLOW OVER ME, AND IMPULSIVELY...
AND THIS TIME, I WILL TRY TO OBEY HIS THINKING.
NOW, KATSURAGI IS BY MY SIDE.


KATSURAGI TOLD ME HE LOVES ME.
I WAS SO HAPPY I COULD HAVE CRIED.
I WAS CARRIED AWAY BY JOY SATISFIED WITH JUST THAT.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO HERE.
BUT I'VE GIVEN UP ON DOUBTING YOU ANYMORE.
I TRUST YOU.
I WAS SIMPLY DELIGHTED THAT KATSURAGI'S MOOD WAS DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE.


...AM I DOING?
WHAT...


DID KATSURAGI SELECT THIS MAN UNDER-STANDING ALL OF THIS?
FROM NOW ON, THE KUZE HOUSE WILL CHANGE A GREAT DEAL. OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE INDUSTRY IN THE OLD FIEF WILL INCREASE.
...
AND MORE IMPOR-TANTLY...
...DOES THIS MAN HAVE THE SELF-POSSESSION...
...TO SUCCEED AS THE MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE?
...
EXCUSE ME, LORD NAOTSUGU.
ARE YOU AWARE OF TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI'S ACHIEVEMENTS?
ONCE YOU REALIZED THE TREMENDOUS EFFORTS HE'S MADE SINCE CHILDHOOD TO TAKE CARE OF THE KUZE HOUSE...

AND HE'S NOT WRONG, YOU KNOW.
WHICH IS WHY IT'S BEST TO SIMPLY TRUST AND FOLLOW HIM.
THERE'S NOTHING EASIER.
IS THIS REALLY ALL RIGHT?
CAN I...
CAN I REALLY SAY KATSURAGI IS NOT MISTAKEN?
GLANCE
HIS SKIN'S SO PALE. HIS LINES ARE SO FINE.
HE SEEMS LIKE A QUIET AND GENTLE MAN.
BUT IF THE STORY ABOUT HIM BEING SICK IS TRUE...
...THERE ARE LIMITS EVEN TO AMAMIYA'S ASSISTANCE.
FATHER'S HALF-BROTHER ...
THAT'S WHAT THEY SAID, AND YET IT DOESN'T FEEL THE SLIGHTEST BIT REAL.

...
IF I WERE TO SAY HOW I REALLY FEEL...
THAT I WANT TO WRAP YOU IN MY ARMS RIGHT NOW AND DISAPPEAR SOMEWHERE, JUST THE TWO OF US...
I LOVE YOU.
I COULD DO ANYTHING IF IT WERE FOR YOUR SAKE.
I DON'T NEED ANYTHING OTHER THAN YOU.
ONLY THIS FEELING HAS NOT CHANGED AT ALL SINCE THE OLD DAYS.

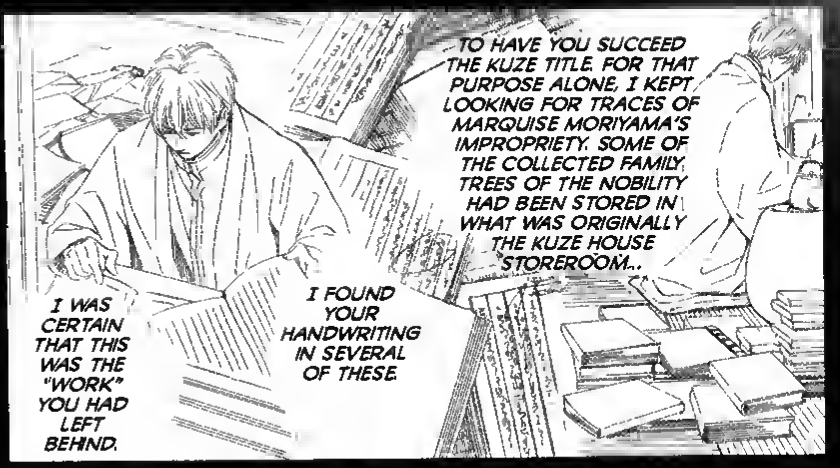
BECAUSE I WAS THERE, THE ONE YOU HAD EDUCATED OVER ALL THOSE YEARS.

I CAN THINK THE SAME WAY AS YOU. I CAN ACT THE SAME WAY. PRECISELY BECAUSE I WAS IN THE KUZE HOUSE.

...DID YOU ACCEPT THE INHERITANCE OF THE KUZE HOUSE KNOWING THIS?

RIGHT.

IT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE I UNDERSTOOD THIS MYSELF THAT I WANTED TO LEAVE THE KUZE HOUSE TO YOU.


TO HAVE YOU SUCCEED THE KUZE TITLE. FOR THAT PURPOSE ALONE, I KEPT LOOKING FOR TRACES OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S IMPROPRIETY. SOME OF THE COLLECTED FAMILY TREES OF THE NOBILITY HAD BEEN STORED IN WHAT WAS ORIGINALLY THE KUZE HOUSE STOREROOM...
I FOUND YOUR HANDWRITING IN SEVERAL OF THESE.
I WAS CERTAIN THAT THIS WAS THE "WORK" YOU HAD LEFT BEHIND.

AFTER ALL, YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE KUZE HOUSE BECAUSE THE HOUSE ITSELF WAS ME, ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
BUT... I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYONE OTHER THAN YOU FOR THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
IT WASN'T AS THOUGH I HADN'T THOUGHT OF ANY OTHER PATHS.

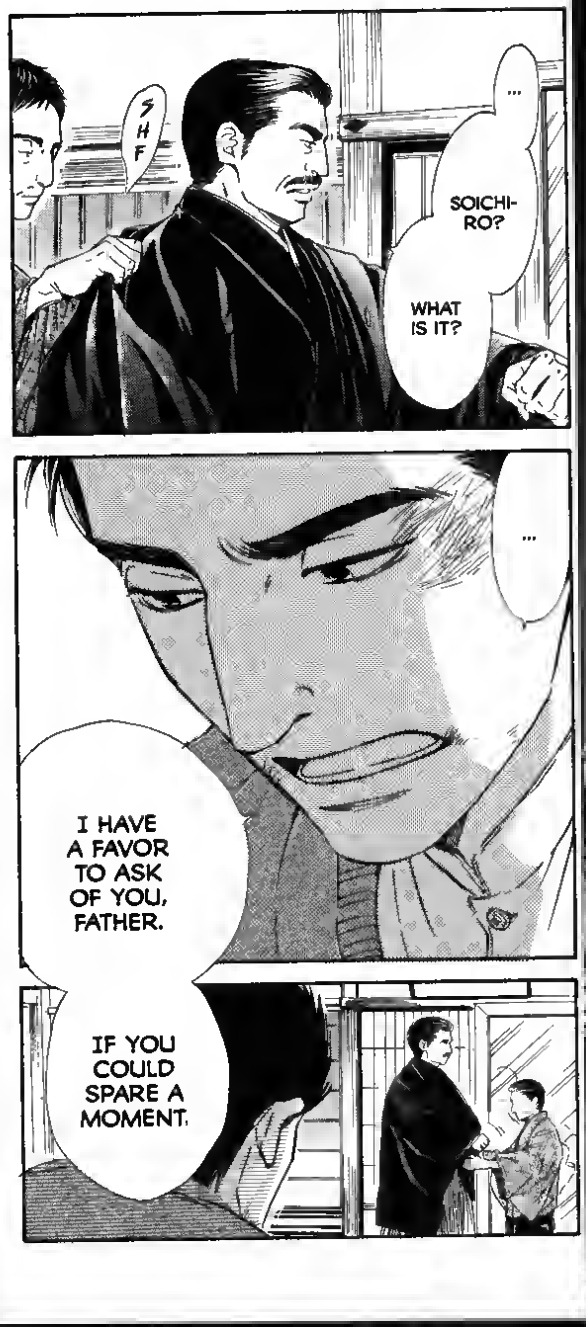
I DON'T WANT TO ERASE THIS THING YOU'VE BUILT.
I... I DON'T WANT TO HAND THE KUZE HOUSE OVER TO THIS PERSON WHOM I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT.
I... CAN'T.
I CAN'T THROW THAT AWAY.
I DON'T WANT TO.
...
KATSURAGI, I'M SORRY...
BUT.
...
KATSURAGI.

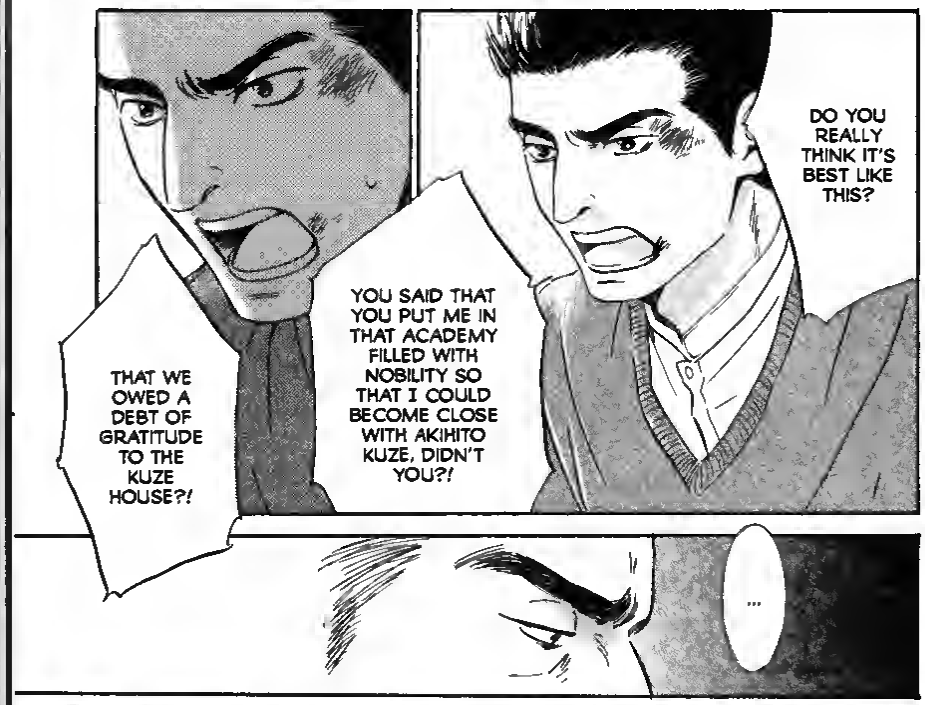
I SAID I TRUSTED HIM...

...AND YET I AM NOT ABLE TO FOLLOW THROUGH TO THE END WITH THAT TRUST.
I'M SORRY... I'M SO SORRY...

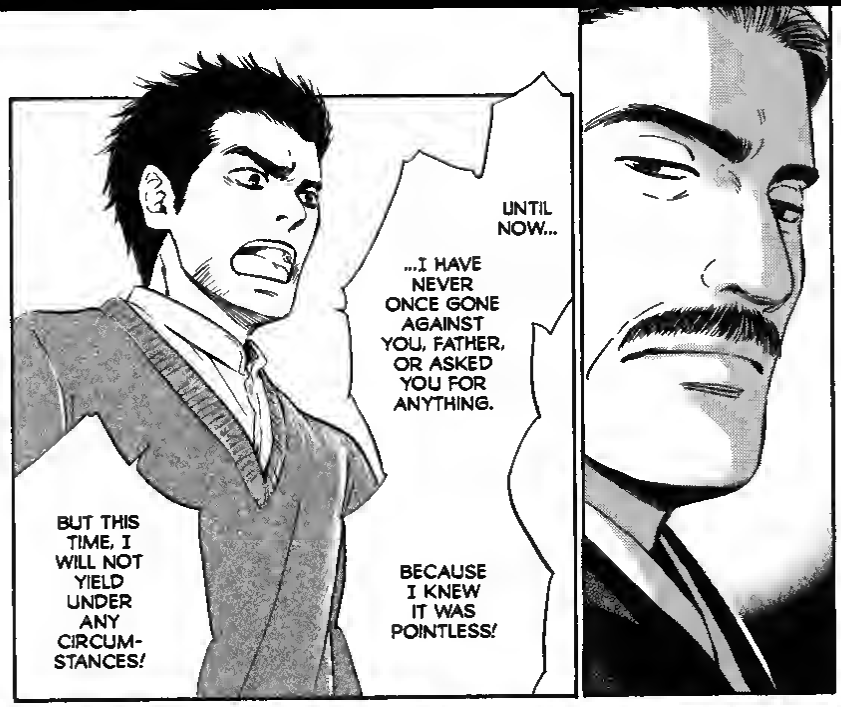
Scene.23 END

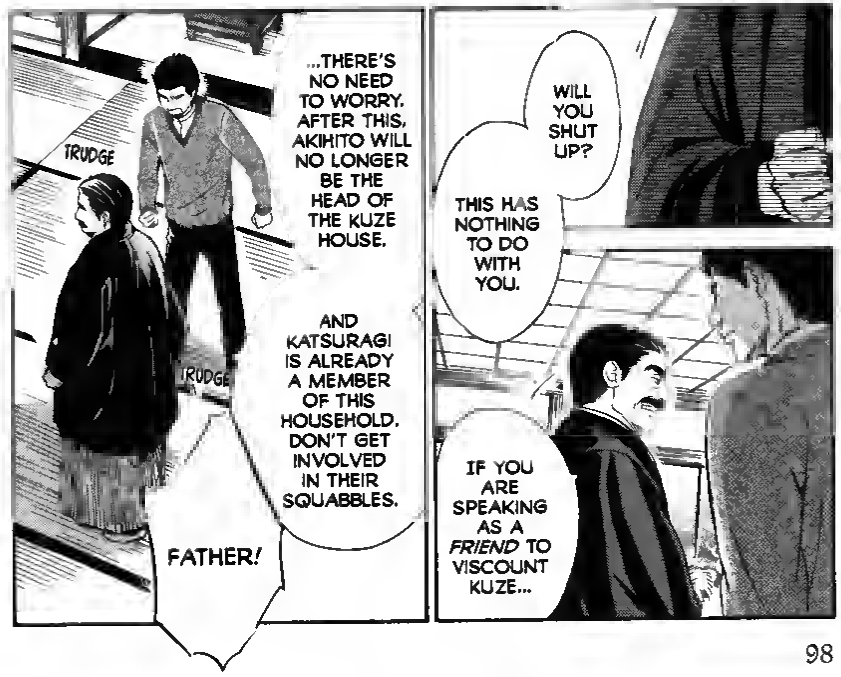
FATHER!
THUK
COME TO SEE ME ANOTHER DAY.
I CAN'T.
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF GETTING READY?
I CAN'T ALLOW THIS CHANCE TO SLIP AWAY.
YOU'RE HARDLY EVER AT THE HOUSE THESE DAYS.
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE KUZE HOUSE!
I TOLD YOU I'M GOING OUT. WERE YOU NOT LISTENING?


SHF
...
SOICHI-RO?
WHAT IS IT?
...
I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU, FATHER.
IF YOU COULD SPARE A MOMENT.
PLEASE EXCUSE THE INTRUSION.
KLATTER


DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S BEST LIKE THIS?
YOU SAID THAT YOU PUT ME IN THAT ACADEMY FILLED WITH NOBILITY SO THAT I COULD BECOME CLOSE WITH AKIHITO KUZE, DIDN'T YOU?!
THAT WE OWED A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE KUZE HOUSE?!
...

ALL THE BAGS ARE READY? AND THE CARRIAGE?
HAVE THE CLERKS GATHER AT THE OFFICE, WHEN I RETURN–
YES, EVERY-THING IS READY, SIR.
PLEASE, WAIT!
GRAB
JUST LISTEN TO ME–
SOICHI-RO!


UNTIL NOW...
...I HAVE NEVER ONCE GONE AGAINST YOU, FATHER, OR ASKED YOU FOR ANYTHING.
BUT THIS TIME, I WILL NOT YIELD UNDER ANY CIRCUM-STANCES!
BECAUSE I KNEW IT WAS POINTLESS!


TRUDGE
TRUDGE
...THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY. AFTER THIS, AKIHITO WILL NO LONGER BE THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
AND KATSURAGI IS ALREADY A MEMBER OF THIS HOUSEHOLD. DON'T GET INVOLVED IN THEIR SQUABBLES.
FATHER!
WILL YOU SHUT UP?
THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.
IF YOU ARE SPEAKING AS A *FRIEND* TO VISCOUNT KUZE...

PLEASE!

...

IN THAT CASE, COME WITH ME.
WHAT?!

...
HON-ESTLY.

TRUDGE
TRUDGE
I DON'T NEED YOU TELLING ME WHAT I ALREADY KNOW.
FA-THER ?
WHO DO YOU THINK I AM, EXACTLY?
WHAT?

YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO STOP ME!
REMOVE YOUR HAND AT ONCE!

THUK
PLEASE! I'M BEGGING YOU!

PLEASE, DON'T...
...ABANDON MY GOOD FRIEND AKIHITO KUZE.

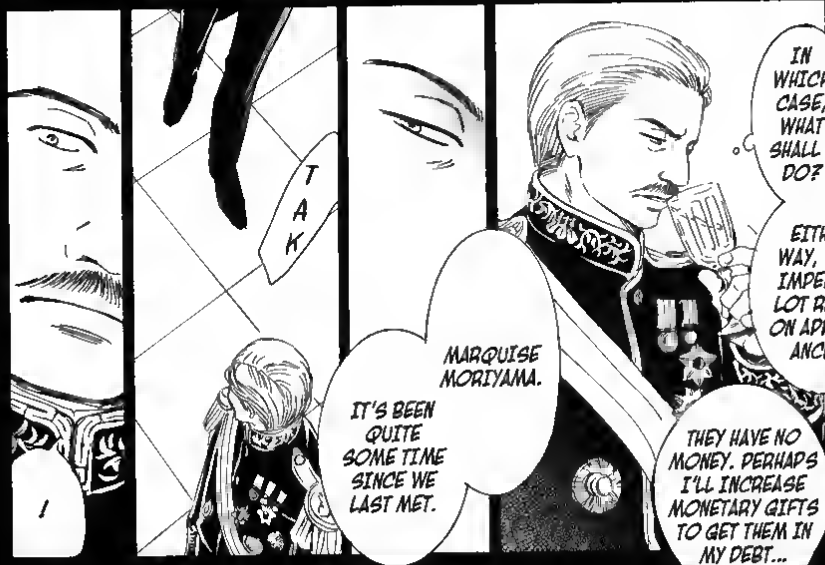
...
SQUEEZE
...NO.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS EARLIER
HALL OF NOBLES
WE'LL SOON NEED TO MAKE REVISIONS AND REPORT TO THE THRONE.
IT'S AN EVEN WORSE POLICY THAN WE EXPECTED.
WE'VE CAREFULLY EXAMINED THE RULES FOR GRANTING SUCH PEERAGE AND PRESCRIBED HOW TO DETERMINE RANK, BUT...
THE PEERAGE ACT DIVIDES THE NOBILITY INTO THE FIVE RANKS OF DUKE, MARQUISE, COUNT, VISCOUNT, AND BARON.
WE STILL NEED A HIERARCHY. CAN'T HAVE EVERYONE SHOULDER TO SHOULDER.
BUT...
CHATTER
CHATTER
IT WASN'T WRONG TO MAKE THE FAMILIES OF THE COURT AND THE FEUDAL LORDS THROW AWAY THEIR FORMER STATUSES AND THEN PUT THEM ALL TOGETHER AS ONE GROUP.
CHAK
FOR SOCIAL POSITIONS IN THE NEW ERA, THE PEERAGE SYSTEM ITSELF IS NOT BAD.

WHERE EXACTLY ARE YOU...
F...
FATHER ?!
SO-ICHIRO.
HAVE YOU STILL NOT LEARNED TO LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE?
YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT AKIHITO, AREN'T YOU?
WE'RE GOING TO THE ESTATE OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA.

...
MY FATHER IS UNEXPECT-EDLY OBSTINATE
I WAS SURE THAT MY OWN SUCCESSION WOULD COME FIRST.
AKINAO KUZE.
I WAS HONESTLY SURPRISED THAT YOU WERE GRANTED A PEERAGE.
HEH
THAT OUR DISTINGUISHED KUZE FAMILY WOULD BE AT THE VISCOUNT LEVEL!
AT THAT TIME, THE THOUGHT DIDN'T EVEN OCCUR TO ME THAT WE WOULD DISCRIMINATE TO SUCH AN EXTENT BETWEEN THE RANKS.
MY FATHER FOOLISHLY ACCEPTED THIS, BUT...
...
TO WHAT DO I OWE THIS SURPRISING CONVER-SATION?
WASN'T IT YOU WHO WAS SO INDIGNANT, REFUSING TO BE ON EQUAL FOOTING WITH THE LOWER-RANKING SAMURAI FAMILIES?

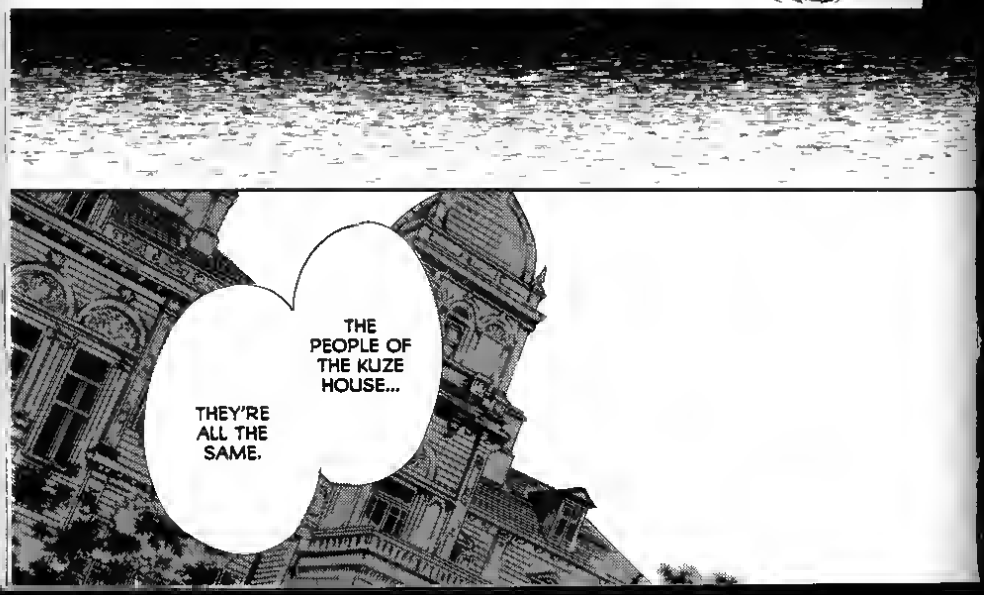
HMPH
...THE PEERAGE ACT ISN'T MEANT TO RECREATE THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY STANDINGS.
THUS...
NOW THE PROCLAMATION CONSIDERS LOWER-RANKING SAMURAI FAMILIES SUCH AS MINE WHO HAVE THE RANK OF MARQUESSATE AS THE "NEW NOBLES"...
AS I EXPECTED, THERE'S DISSATIS-FACTION ALL AROUND.
THE FRICTION WITH THE PRINCES AND "OLD NOBLES" OF THE COURT ISN'T GOING TO STOP FOR A WHILE.


I
TAK
MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
IT'S BEEN QUITE SOME TIME SINCE WE LAST MET.
IN WHICH CASE, WHAT SHALL I DO?
EITHER WAY, THIS IMPERIAL LOT RESTS ON APPEAR-ANCES.
THEY HAVE NO MONEY. PERHAPS I'LL INCREASE MONETARY GIFTS TO GET THEM IN MY DEBT...

THAT YOU WERE BESTOWED A TITLE BY HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY PRAISING YOUR DISTINGUISHED SERVICES DURING THE RESTORATION WAS SURELY BECAUSE OF THE LATE MINISTER MORIYAMA AND NOT YOU YOURSELF.
AND CERTAINLY...
CLENCH
WHAT MAKES ME EVEN ANGRIER IS THAT A MAN LIKE YOU, WHO HAS NARY AN ACCOMPLISHMENT TO HIS NAME, SHOULD SUCCEED TO A TITLE AS THOUGH IT WERE THE MOST NATURAL THING IN THE WORLD.
...NOT THE MORIYAMA FAMILY.

EXACTLY HOW MUCH THOUGHT DO YOU GIVE TO FAMILY STATUS, MARQUISE MORIYAMA?!
...I ABSOLUTELY DO NOT AGREE WITH IT!
...THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE FIVE RANKS IS EXCESSIVELY UNJUST!
I APPROVE OF THE THINKING BEHIND CIVILIANS AND THE MILITARY BEING TOGETHER IN THIS NEW ERA. BUT...
AND BY YOUR OWN FATHER!
TO TOP IT OFF, THIS WAS ALL DECIDED IN A MANNER WE OLD NOBLES KNEW NOTHING ABOUT!
THERE ARE TWELVE SAMURAI FAMILIES FROM THE SAME CLAN AS YOURS RANKED WITH THE NOBILITY!
YOU CAN'T DENY THIS.
H-HOW CAN YOU—

...
HOW UNSIGHTLY.


THE PEOPLE OF THE KUZE HOUSE...
THEY'RE ALL THE SAME.

YOU'RE ALL MERELY FOOLS CLINGING VAINLY TO THE GLORIES OF THE PAST!
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE
THE MORIYAMA HOUSE IS A FAMILY OF THE NEW ERA...
COMPARED TO THAT, YOU...
ALL OF YOU.
WHAT... ARE YOU SAYING..
TAK
TAK
CHATTER

SOME DAY...!
SOME DAY, THE TIME WILL MOST CERTAINLY COME WHEN YOU'LL REGRET LOOKING DOWN ON ME.
YOU PRINCES ARE LIKE RUBBISH NOW THAT THE FEUDAL SYSTEM HAS BEEN ABOLISHED.

AT THAT TIME...
...YOU REACHED OUT TO ME.
YOU SAID, "SO THE DISTINGUISHED FAMILY ACTS LIKE THE FASHIONABLE NOUVEAU RICHE?"
IT WAS AROUND THE TIME THAT MASTER AKINAO WAS LIVING IN RETREAT IN KAMAKURA.
I WAS ONLY NINETEEN. WHILE STUDYING AT THE ACADEMY, I WAS ATTENDING EVENTS HERE AND THERE AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KUZE HOUSE.

A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF POWER THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO LEGALLY REMOVE THE HEIR AND TAKE CONTROL OF THE SEAT OF THE KUZE HEAD OF HOUSE.
I NEEDED POWER.
AND I...
...
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THE FIRST TIME YOU CAME WITH ME TO KABUTO-CHO?
YOU NEEDED A LARGE SUM OF MONEY.
MONEY TO SHUT UP THE FUSSY OLD NOBLES AND THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

SO ARRO-GANT!
YOU ACT IN A WAY THAT DOES NOTHING BUT PROVOKE OTHERS!

...
YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.
DO YOU REMEMBER THE DAY YOU AND I FIRST MET?

WE HAVE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER A LONG TIME.
I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW WHAT I WISH...
...WITHOUT ME HAVING TO SAY IT.

YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.
MASTER AKIHITO IS STILL ONLY EIGHTEEN.

...
YOU MUST KNOW THAT I CAN'T FORGIVE HIM.
EVEN IF YOU FALL ON THE BLADE.

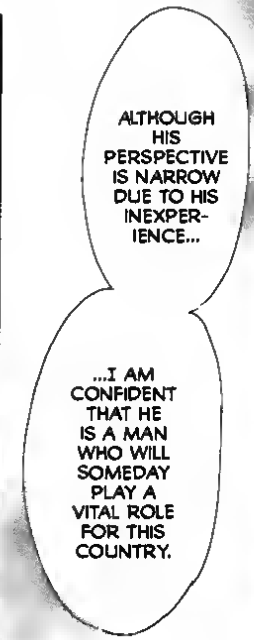
NO.
I SAID THIS EARLIER AS WELL, BUT IT DOES NOT MATTER NOW.
ON NO ACCOUNT DO I OBEY YOU IN SELF-INTEREST.
...
SOON YOU WILL HAVE IT.
I'VE...
...WOKEN UP FROM THAT DREAM.
I WISH TO BE COMPENSATED FOR ALL THE EFFORTS I HAVE EXPENDED UNTIL NOW ON THE BEHALF OF YOUR EXCELLENCY.
THUS, I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE AN ACCOUNTING DONE THIS EVENING.
THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME I TALK TO YOU PERSONALLY, YOUR EXCELLENCY.

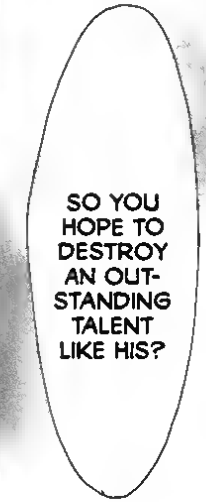
SHF
...THAT THE MAN ACTING AS AKIHITO'S PATRON RIPPED APART THE YOUNG PAIR IN A FIT OF SELFISHNESS?

THERE ARE QUITE A NUMBER OF OLD NOBLES WHO ARE DISSATISFIED WITH YOUR EXCELLENCY. AND IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE...
SHALL I RELEASE THIS LITTLE BIRD NEAR THE EAR OF SOMEONE OUTSIDE WHO DOES NOTHING BUT GOSSIP?
NONSENSE. THAT WAS AKIHITO HIMSELF WHO–
NO ONE WANTS THE "REAL STORY." IT'S MERELY A MATTER OF WHETHER THE MASSES LIKE IT OR NOT.

I BELIEVE THAT THIS SCHEME, THE VERY DEFINITION OF REVENGE, IS A FOOLISH MOVE THAT WILL RUIN YOUR RENOWN.
AT ANY RATE, MASTER AKIHITO IS AT THE HEAD OF HIS CLASS AT THE ACADEMY. THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT MUST ALSO BE AWARE OF THIS.
AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WOULD ASSERT THAT THE VERY ACT OF DESTROYING SUCH AN EXCELLENT MAN IS AN ACT OF REBELLION AGAINST HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY.

WHAT IF IT WERE TO BECOME KNOWN...
TAK
OR WHAT ABOUT THE REAL REASON HIS ENGAGEMENT, WHICH WAS VERY NEARLY REPORTED TO THE EMPEROR, WAS BROKEN OFF?
RIDICULOUS ...
AH


ALTHOUGH HIS PERSPECTIVE IS NARROW DUE TO HIS INEXPERIENCE...
...I AM CONFIDENT THAT HE IS A MAN WHO WILL SOMEDAY PLAY A VITAL ROLE FOR THIS COUNTRY.


SO YOU HOPE TO DESTROY AN OUTSTANDING TALENT LIKE HIS?

TIK
TIK
TIK
...
HE'S LATE.
#
CHATTER
CHATTER

AFTER ALL, VISCOUNT AKIHITO IS AN INCREDIBLY STRANGE PERSON FOR THE NOBILITY.
EVER SINCE HE WAS LITTLE
AND I'M DESPISED AS WELL
RUSTLE
IN THE END...
...WILL EVERYTHING COME ABOUT JUST AS KATSURAGI HAD PLANNED?

WHEN IT COMES TO MASTER AKIHITO, THERE IS NO DOUBT.

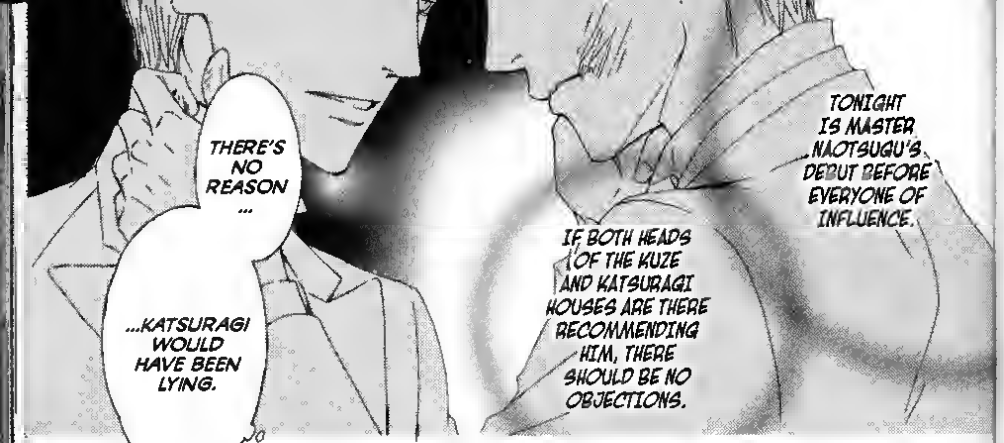
DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE A LARGE NUMBER OF REPORTERS WAITING OUTSIDE THE GATES TONIGHT?
...INTERESTED PARTIES WILL COMMUNICATE WITH THE HOUSE OF DUKE SAJO.
AND THEN IT WILL LIKELY REACH THE EARS OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
....
RAP
RAP
YOU VILE SCOUNDREL.
EXACTLY WHAT IS THIS...
..."COMPENSATION" YOU SEEK?

ON THE OCCASION OF MY SUCCESSION, THEY WILL BE SO KIND AS TO BUILD US A NEW MANOR IN CELEBRATION.
THE FAMILY OF MY MOTHER-IN-LAW, LADY KAYOKO, ARE EXTREMELY WEALTHY MERCHANTS IN NIHON-BASHI.
I'VE BEEN HEARING RUMORS THAT LORD SHIGEYUKI MIGHT FINALLY BE INHERITING HIS TITLE.
YES.
NOW, NOW, IT MIGHT BE A LITTLE PRINCESS, YOU KNOW.
WE ARE SO LOOKING FORWARD TO THE BIRTH OF YOUR HEIR!
I WILL BE IN HIS DEBT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.
THAT WE SAIONJIS, ONCE SO FORLORN AND IN SUCH A WRETCHED STATE, ARE NOW ABLE TO LIVE SO PEACEFULLY IS ENTIRELY DUE TO KATSURAGI.
WHISPER
EXCUSE ME.
WE'VE JUST HAD A REPORT FROM THE GATEKEEPER...
SAY TO THAT?
AM I TO...
...
WHAT...
...
LORD SAIONJI.

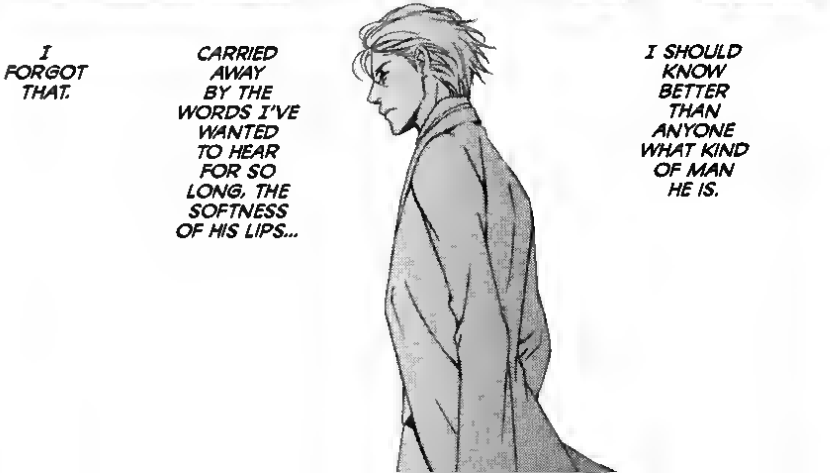
...HE HAS NO SELF-AWARENESS AS THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
MASTER SHIGEYUKI, THIS IS NO LAUGHING MATTER.
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT HE MUST OBEY ME UNTIL HE COMES OF AGE?
EVEN THOUGH HE'S ALREADY FIFTEEN...
I MUST ALWAYS BE VIGILANT.
THERE IS NO TEST TO PROVE THAT HE HAS TURNED OUT AS I WISH.
LORD SHIGEYUKI!?
NO.
I WAS JUST WONDERING HOW TAKAKO IS DOING AT THE MANOR.
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

I CAN'T...
...OBEY YOU ANYMORE.
KATSURAGI.

LORD SAION-JI?
APPARENTLY, A VERY UNUSUAL GUEST JUST ARRIVED.
IS THAT SO?
TELL MARQUISE MORIYAMA RIGHT AWAY.
VERY GOOD, SIR.
NOW THEN.
IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HE WOULD HAVE FOR-GOTTEN THIS.
ONLY FOR VISCOUNT AKIHITO HAS HE EXPENDED ALL HIS EFFORTS, UNABLE TO REMAIN COMPLETELY OBJECTIVE.
SNAP
I WONDER IF EVERY-THING WILL GO AS KATSURAGI EXPECTS?


THERE'S NO REASON ...
...KATSURAGI WOULD HAVE BEEN LYING.
IF BOTH HEADS OF THE KUZE AND KATSURAGI HOUSES ARE THERE RECOMMENDING HIM, THERE SHOULD BE NO OBJECTIONS.
TONIGHT IS MASTER NAOTSUGU'S DEBUT BEFORE EVERYONE OF INFLUENCE.

EVEN AFTER HE CONFESSED HIS LOVE, EVEN IF HE STAYS WITH ME FOREVER...
...HIS WILL SHALL NOT BE BENT.
BUT MOST LIKELY, HE DIDN'T REVEAL HIS ENTIRE PLAN TO ME.
HE KNEW THAT IF HE DID, I MIGHT GO AGAINST IT.


I FORGOT THAT.
CARRIED AWAY BY THE WORDS I'VE WANTED TO HEAR FOR SO LONG, THE SOFTNESS OF HIS LIPS...
I SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE WHAT KIND OF MAN HE IS.

I REALLY AM AN IDIOT...
...

IF ONLY I COULD SIMPLY TRUST KATSURAGI AND BASK IN HIS KINDNESS...
AFTER ALL, I KNOW I COULD BE INCREDIBLY HAPPY WITH JUST THAT.
BUT.
I CAN'T.
MASTER AKIHITO.

IS IT ALL RIGHT THAT I CALL YOU "MASTER AKIHITO"?
OR SHOULD IT BE "VISCOUNT KUZE"?
AH
!
OH!
NO...
PLEASE, JUST "AKIHITO" IS FINE...

IT'S IRONIC...
BECAUSE I AM WHO I AM NOW, I UNDERSTAND.
KATSURAGI SAID THAT THE TWO OF US WOULD "MAKE IT WORK SOMEHOW" FOR THE KUZE HOUSE.
MASTER NAOTSUGU ISN'T A PART OF THAT.
IF YOU DO, I WILL STAY WITH YOU MY ENTIRE LIFE.
ENSURE YOU ARE PROMOTED.
KATSURAGI'S REQUEST, HIS FEELINGS TOWARD HIM...
IN THE END THEY RESULTED IN THIS DEAL.
...
KATSURAGI APPROVED OF MY RETIREMENT.
MASTER AKIHITO.
SO WHAT IS THE THINKING BEHIND-

THE MEMBERS OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE, WHO HAD SERVED THE KUZE HOUSE AS CHIEF RETAINERS IN THE OLD FEUDAL ERA, WERE LOOKING FOR ME.
I HEARD A RUMOR TO THAT EFFECT, ANYWAY.
BUT I IGNORED IT AND FLED.
...
I HAD NO INTEREST IN APPEARING BEFORE THE WORLD.
KLATTER

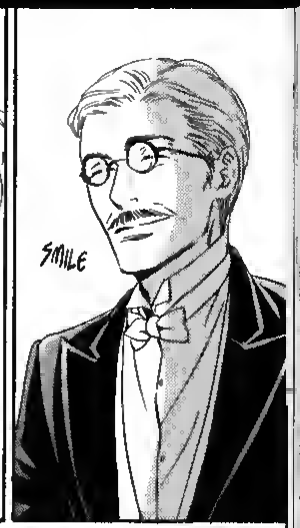
WELL, IT'S A STRANGE THING.
PLEASE, DO SIT.

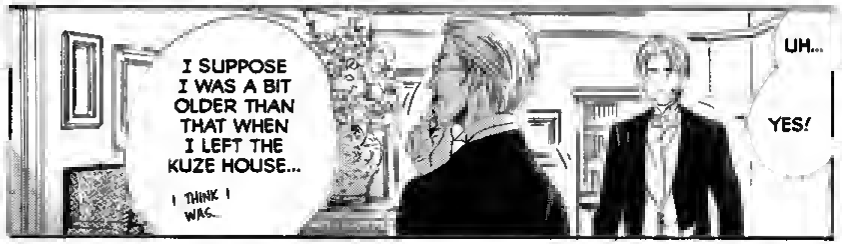
KLAK

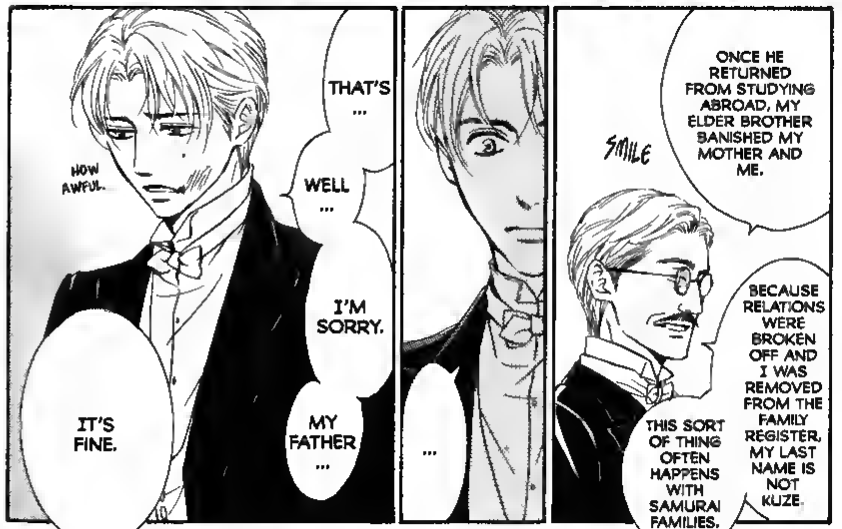
THANK YOU.
OBEDIENT
I MYSELF HAVE FOR A LONG TIME BEEN UNCOMFORTABLE ON THESE SOFT SOFAS.

AS TO WHY I FIND MYSELF HERE NOW...

I HEARD THAT YOU ARE NOW EIGHTEEN, MASTER AKIHITO.
BOW
WHAT IS THIS...
HE'S GOT QUITE THE STRANGE BEARING.


SMILE


I SUPPOSE I WAS A BIT OLDER THAN THAT WHEN I LEFT THE KUZE HOUSE...
I THINK I WAS...
UH...
YES!


HOW AWFUL.
IT'S FINE.
THAT'S ...
WELL ...
I'M SORRY.
MY FATHER ...
...
SMILE
ONCE HE RETURNED FROM STUDYING ABROAD, MY ELDER BROTHER BANISHED MY MOTHER AND ME.
BECAUSE RELATIONS WERE BROKEN OFF AND I WAS REMOVED FROM THE FAMILY REGISTER, MY LAST NAME IS NOT KUZE.
THIS SORT OF THING OFTEN HAPPENS WITH SAMURAI FAMILIES.

LET ME STATE WHY IT IS I HAVE BROUGHT MYSELF HERE...
...MASTER AKIHITO.
MASTER NAO-TSUGU.
EX-ACTLY WHAT IS
...THIS MAN?
I'M AWARE THAT I'M A SMALL VESSEL.
BUT I DO NOT POSSESS EVEN A SHRED OF THAT DISPOSI-TION.
HE WAS A STRICT MAN, BUT AS HEAD OF THE HOUSE HE WAS PERFECT. HE HAD A FORCE THAT MADE PEOPLE OBEY HIM.
MY ELDER BROTHER WAS DIFFER-ENT.
IT IS BECAUSE I HAVE A FAVOR I WISH TO ASK OF YOU.
YOUR EXCELLENCY, HAVE YOU MET THE HALF-BROTHER OF LORD AKINAO?

FROM START TO FINISH, I WAS UNABLE TO BE A PROPER MEMBER OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
THE LIFESTYLE NOT FITTING MY STATURE... THE NEWLY BUILT WESTERN HOUSE... I JUST COULDN'T SEEM TO GET USED TO ANY OF IT.
THE LUXURIOUS CHAIRS I WAS GIVEN...
THIS IS NOT A MATTER OF "BIRTH" OR "EDUCATION."
I HAVE, IN FACT, BEEN EDUCATED AS A MAN OF A SAMURAI FAMILY AND AS A NOBLE.
...
SMILE
I SUPPOSE THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "BEYOND ONE'S POSITION."

...HE HAS FIVE YEARS.
THAT THINKING REMAINS UNCHANGED EVEN NOW.
UNLIKE MYSELF AND MY UNCLEAR ORIGINS, HE IS A MAN WHO HAS WITHOUT DOUBT INHERITED THE KUZE BLOOD.
BUT HE IS HARDLY SUITED TO BE THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
TAK
YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.
TAK
THE DOCTOR THERE SAYS THAT MASTER NAOTSUGU FREQUENTLY SUCCUMBS TO FEVERS.
THE PROGNOSIS IS THAT...

IT WAS YOU WHO CHASED HIM OUT TO THE COUNTRY, FORCING HIM INTO LIMBO.
KATSURAGI.
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SAID HE WAS IN THE WAY, AN OBSTACLE TO BECOMING THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
HMPH
NO REASON I WOULD HAVE.
TAK
...
I DID.
...YOU SAID TO USE HIM AS A STANDBY.
ALL FOR THE SAKE OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE KUZE HOUSE, YOU SAID.
AND IN THE EVENT THAT THE HEIR, AKIHITO KUZE, WERE TO PASS ON AT AN EARLY AGE...

ARE YOU AN IDIOT?!
A...
...I BELIEVE THAT MASTER NAOTSUGU WILL WITHDRAW...
...BEFORE FIVE YEARS HAVE PASSED.
...I'M ASKING YOU FOR AN UNPRECE-DENTED ARRANGEMENT!
WHICH IS WHY...
ONCE AN INHERITED NOBLE WITHDRAWS, THAT'S THE END OF IT. RETURNING TO THE SAME TITLE–
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A THING!
...TO REFORM THE PEERAGE ACT SO THAT MASTER AKIHITO IS ABLE TO INHERIT THE KUZE COUNTSHIP AFTER MASTER NAOTSUGU
I AM TELLING YOU...

YOUR EXCELLENCY.
WHA–
THE MATTER OF MASTER AKIHITO'S RETIREMENT HAS ALREADY BEEN COMMUNICATED TO THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT.
REGRETTABLY, IT IS TOO LATE TO OVERTURN IT.
EVEN THOUGH ...
...I INTEND TO ENTRUST MASTER NAOTSUGU AS A TEMPORARY STAND-IN AT THE KUZE HOUSE.
THUS, FOR THE TIME BEING...

憂鬱な朝

THAT'S ...
THAT'S PREPOST-EROUS. YOU...
WHY WOULD YOU GO SO FAR-
YOU CAN'T BE...
FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
EVERY EFFORT I'VE EXPENDED OVER THESE YEARS FOR YOUR EXCELLENCY...

Scene.24 END

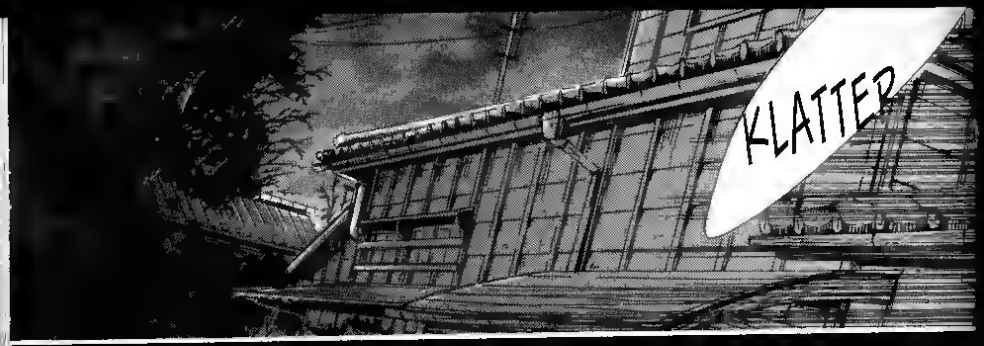
憂鬱な朝

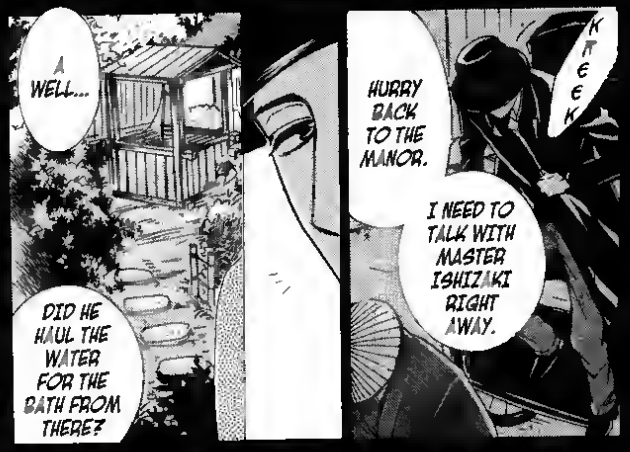
scene.25

憂鬱な朝

DRIP
I'M MORE SUITED...
...TO THIS LIFE THAN YOU THINK.
DRIP
FWSH
WHERE DOES THAT SELF-CONFIDENCE COME FROM?
SO HE SAYS.
MOST LIKELY, THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, KNOWING MASTER SOICHIRO'S PROCLIVITIES WITH WOMEN, SET THIS HOUSE UP.
THIS IS A BUILDING THAT KNOWS TO STAY OUT OF ITS MASTER'S WAY.
BRAND-NEW CLOTH, JUST-PURCHASED UNDERWEAR.
ALL OF IT BROUGHT FROM THE KUZE HOUSE.
SHF
IT'S NOT THE SORT OF HOUSE A MERE MAID COULD ACQUIRE.
AND IT MIGHT BE DOWNTOWN, BUT THIS IS A FIRST-CLASS BUILDING WITH ITS OWN BATH
SSP

PLIP
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
KATSU-RAGI.
DRIP
PSSH
KLAK


KLATTER


A WELL...
DID HE HAUL THE WATER FOR THE BATH FROM THERE?
KIEEK
HURRY BACK TO THE MANOR.
I NEED TO TALK WITH MASTER ISHIZAKI RIGHT AWAY.

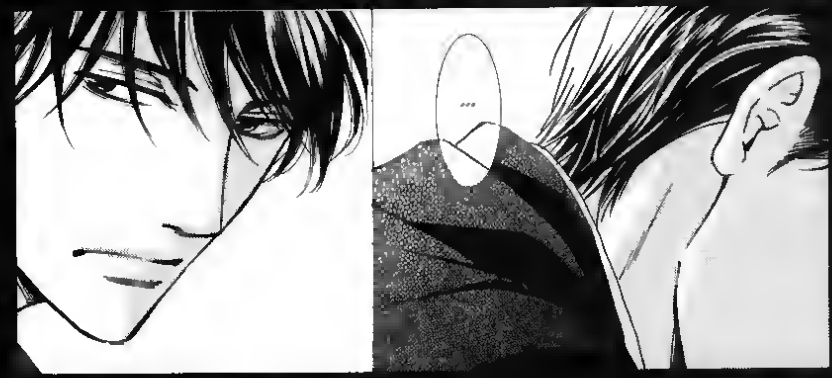
...
HOW FOOLISH.

BECOMING COVERED IN SOOT...
BURNING THE KINDLING...
SCRAPING HIS FINGERTIPS...
...UNTIL THE TUB WAS FULL
OVER AND OVER ...

MASTER AKIHITO...

MASTER AKIHITO...
THUM
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU'RE HERE? HOW HAVE YOU BEEN LIVING?

ALL RIGHT, THEN.
DON'T BE HERE WHEN I GET BACK.
I'LL CALL A CAR FOR YOU.


...

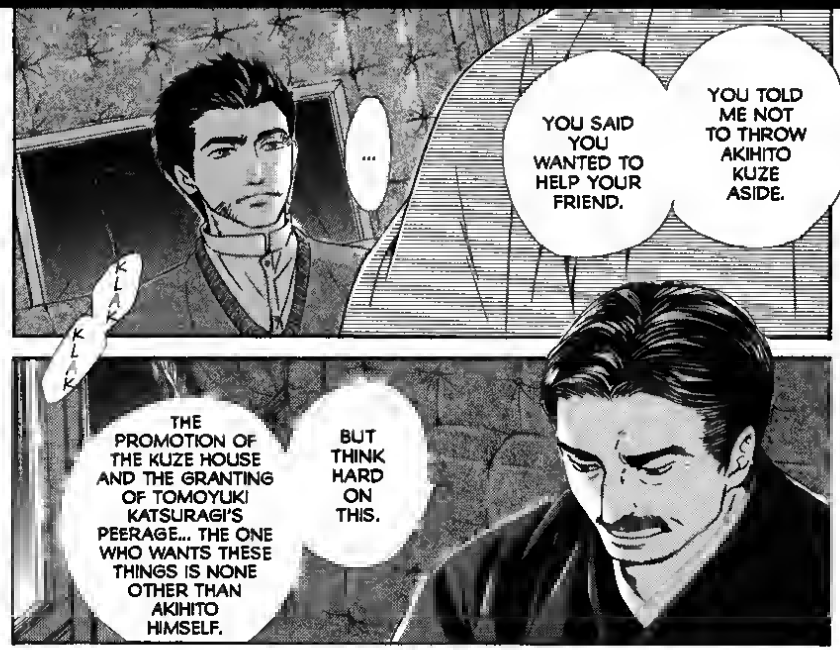
ABOVE ALL ELSE, THREATENING MARQUISE MORIYAMA AND BEING ABLE TO LIVE IN PEACE AND QUIET IS JUST NOT—
IF HE LEAVES THE KUZE HOUSE AND ABANDONS THE KUZE NAME, IT WILL BE THE END OF HIM.
EVEN THIS HOUSE, AT A SINGLE WORD FROM MASTER ISHIZAKI, COULD FALL INTO THE HANDS OF ANOTHER.
...
STOP.

MASTER AKIHITO HAS NOT THE SLIGHTEST IDEA OF POVERTY.

DOES HE REALLY BELIEVE IN HIS HEART THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE LIKE THAT FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE?

I'LL RETURN TO THE ISHIZAKIS' LATER.
FIRST, HEAD TOWARD KABUTO-CHO.
THAT'S RIGHT.
THERE'S STILL TIME.
I AM THE ONE WHO CAN SAVE MASTER AKIHITO.
I AM THE ONE WHO CAN PUT EVERYTHING BACK THE WAY IT WAS.
...
FOR THIS PURPOSE...

...
BECAUSE I THINK...
...TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI IS NOT WORTH AKIHITO KUZE SACRIFICING EVERYTHING.
KATSURAGI IS JUST A BASE...
...ORDINARY MAN.
HE'S NOT THE STRONG FIGURE KUZE THINKS HE IS.
THE PERSON WHO SHOULD BE THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE IS AKIHITO KUZE.
I'M CERTAIN OF IT.


...
YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO HELP YOUR FRIEND.
YOU TOLD ME NOT TO THROW AKIHITO KUZE ASIDE.
KLAK
KLAK
BUT THINK HARD ON THIS.
THE PROMOTION OF THE KUZE HOUSE AND THE GRANTING OF TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI'S PEERAGE... THE ONE WHO WANTS THESE THINGS IS NONE OTHER THAN AKIHITO HIMSELF.

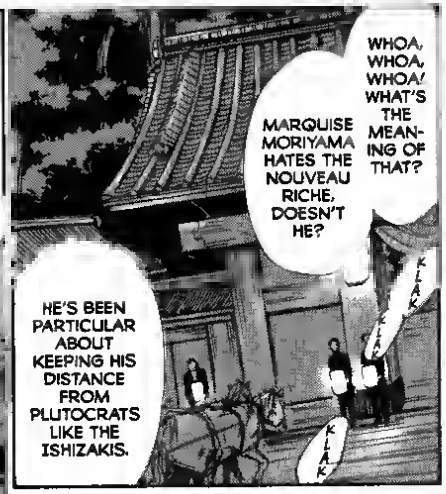
DO YOU THINK HE WANTS MY HELP AT THIS STAGE?

KLAK
KLAK
...
I'M AGAINST WHAT KUZE WANTS TO DO.
WHY?
GRAH!
SIGH
...
THIS IS ABSURD!
THINK THIS THROUGH YOURSELF! RIGHT NOW!
YOU'RE PROBABLY GOING TO HIT ME AGAIN...
YOU TOLD ME TO KEEP OUT OF IT...

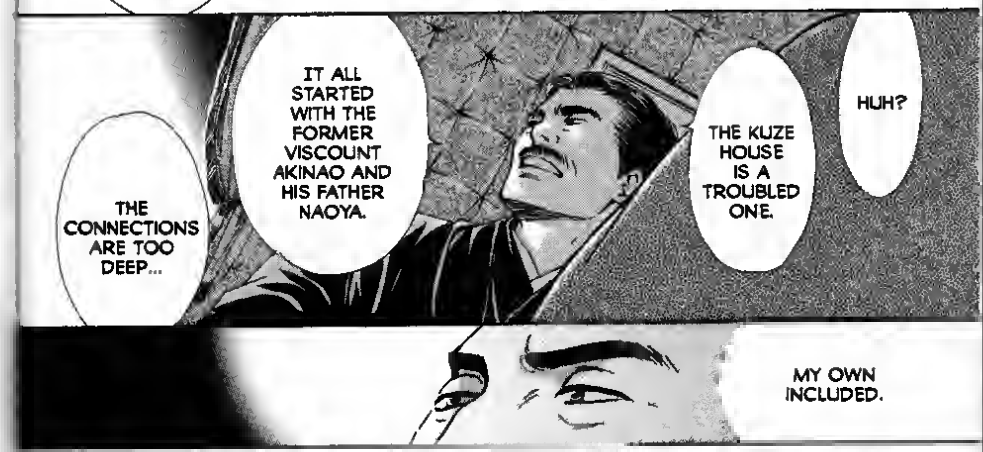
THE END RESULT?
KLAK
KLAK
THAT'LL BE THE END RESULT.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU'LL HELP KUZE FOR ME?
...
KATSURAGI WILL BE EASIER TO MANAGE THAT WAY.
I'D RATHER HAVE AKIHITO BE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.

WHAT?!
IT'S THE ISHIZAKIS' CARRIAGE!
OW!
SMACK
SMACK
HEY!
HEY! LOOK!

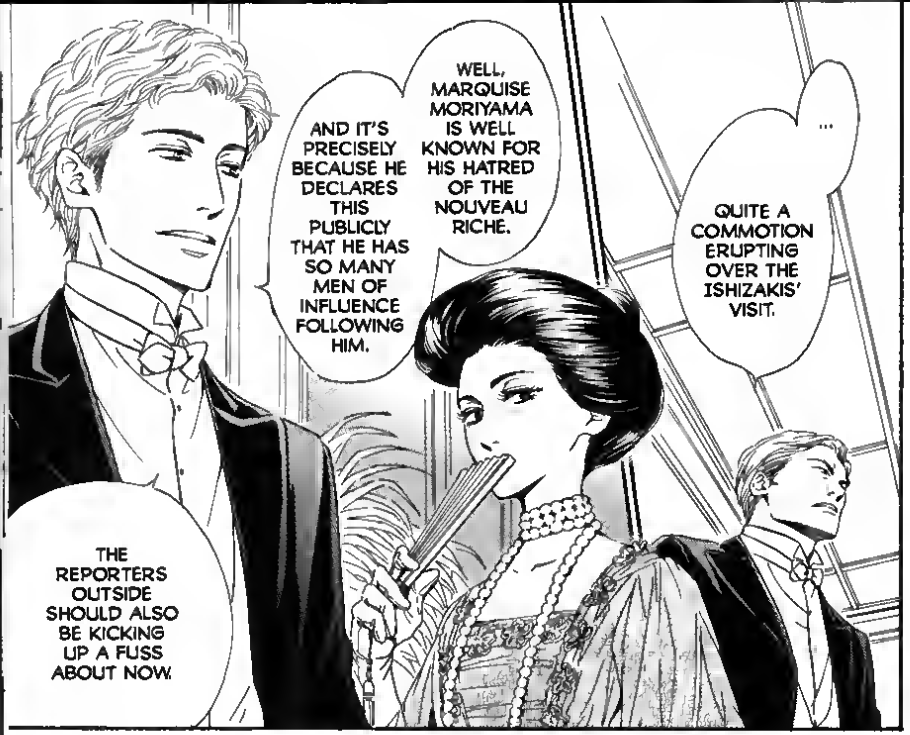
!
THAT MUST BE IT! TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI. HE SHOWED UP EARLIER, RIGHT?
LOOK, YOU.
IT'S *BECAUSE* THEY'RE THE SAME. IT'S A LITTLE THING CALLED SELF-HATRED!
STRANGE. HIS WIFE COMES FROM A MERCHANT FAMILY.
MARQUISE MORIYAMA HATES MERCHANTS?


HE'S BEEN PARTICULAR ABOUT KEEPING HIS DISTANCE FROM PLUTOCRATS LIKE THE ISHIZAKIS.
MARQUISE MORIYAMA HATES THE NOUVEAU RICHE, DOESN'T HE?
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA! WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THAT?
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK

SOICHIRO.
YOU DON'T KNOW THE PAST. YOU'RE NOT HINDERED BY IT.
WHICH IS PROBABLY WHY YOU CAN SEE RIGHT TO THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER.

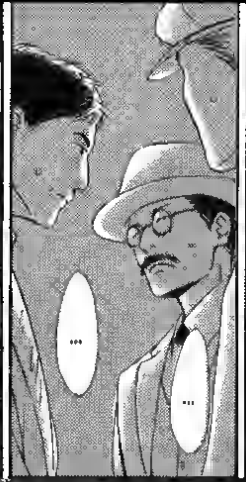

THE CONNECTIONS ARE TOO DEEP...
IT ALL STARTED WITH THE FORMER VISCOUNT AKINAO AND HIS FATHER NAOYA.
THE KUZE HOUSE IS A TROUBLED ONE.
HUH?
MY OWN INCLUDED.

IT WOULD BE A PROBLEM IF HE WERE TO RETURN TO THE KUZE HOUSE NOW.
FOR THE PRESENT, WHAT I WANT IS TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI.
AT ANY RATE.
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
...


WELL, MARQUISE MORIYAMA IS WELL KNOWN FOR HIS HATRED OF THE NOUVEAU RICHE.
AND IT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE HE DECLARES THIS PUBLICLY THAT HE HAS SO MANY MEN OF INFLUENCE FOLLOWING HIM.
...
QUITE A COMMOTION ERUPTING OVER THE ISHIZAKIS' VISIT.
THE REPORTERS OUTSIDE SHOULD ALSO BE KICKING UP A FUSS ABOUT NOW.

PERHAPS HE'S PLANNING SOMETHING THAT WE HAVEN'T BEEN INFORMED OF?
IS TOMO-YUKI STILL...
...WITH MARQUISE MORI-YAMA?
YES, IN THE OFFICE.
ALTHOUGH I DID SEND A SERVANT EARLIER TO INFORM HIM OF HIS GUEST.
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TOO LATE?

SOME-THING HAPPEN ?
OH.
WE NEED TO BUY OFF SOME OF THE SERVANTS AND FAST! WHAT'S HAPPENING INSIDE...
THERE'S DEFINITELY SOME-THING GOING ON!
OVER THERE
WHAT HAPPENED?
HEY! DON'T TRY GETTING THE JUMP ON ME!


...
...

WELL, *HE'S* THE CURRENT HEAD CLERK FOR THE ISHIZAKIS!
!

THERE'S A GREAT NUMBER OF LORDS GATHERED TOGETHER...
I WONDER WHAT THE FUSS IS.
CHATTER
TAKE A LOOK OVER THERE.
CHATTER
CHATTER
DID YOU HEAR?
A RIDICU-LOUSLY SHOWY CARRIAGE OUTSIDE...
INFORM HIS EXCELLENCY.
CHATTER

SO AT SOME POINT YOU WERE INTENDING TO HAVE THIS "DISEASE" WORSEN INTO SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS, I SUPPOSE.
THAT'S IT EXACT-LY.
HOWEVER, THAT PLAN WAS, AT BEST, SIMPLY ON PAPER.
NOTHING WOULD HAVE CHANGED HAD I SIMPLY LEFT IT LIKE THAT.
NEVER IN MY WILDEST DREAMS...
...DID I THINK MASTER AKIHITO HIMSELF WOULD USE MY PLANS AND CONSIDER HIS OWN RETIREMENT.
BROTHER ...

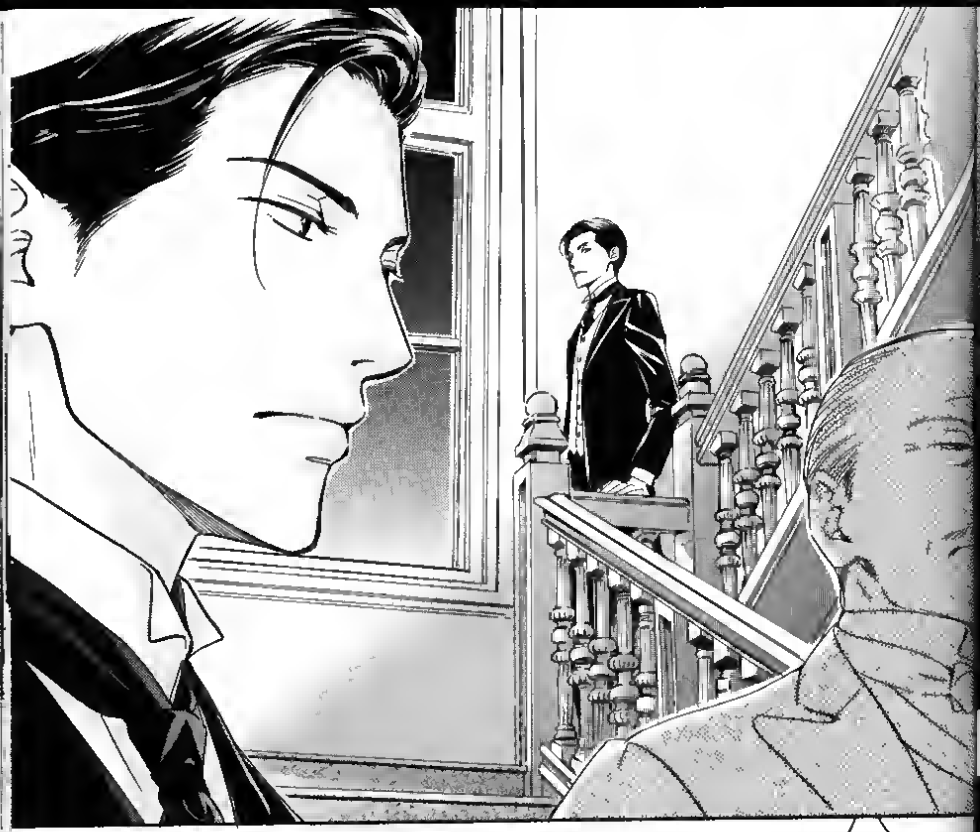
...
HE IS NOT.
MASTER AKIHITO IS EVERY-THING.
KATSURAGI NO LONGER NEEDS MORIYAMA'S CLOUT.
THE ONLY THING IN THAT MAN'S HEAD RIGHT NOW IS VISCOUNT AKIHITO.
HEE HEE
AN ATTACH-MENT THAT'S GONE TOO FAR...
I DO THINK IT'S A PROBLEM, IN FACT.
BUT THAT ALL HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH US.
...I HIRED A DOCTOR AND HAD HIM WRITE UP A FALSE DIAGNOSIS.
I BELIEVE YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE OF THIS, BUT...
BROTHER.
...

I'M RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THE VERY IDEA OF VISCOUNT KUZE LEAVING HIS SEAT AS HEAD OF THE HOUSE...
...BUT WE CAN'T GO BACK NOW. SO UNTIL WE SELECT SOMEONE BETTER THAN YOU...
HIRO-YUKI.
...WE'LL LEND OUR SUPPORT AS A BRANCH FAMILY OF THE KUZES' IN BACKING MASTER NAOTSUGU.
YES!
FIND OUT WHERE MASTER NAOTSUGU IS. IMMEDI-ATELY.
I SUPPOSE IF YOU GO AROUND TO THE RETAINERS IN THE OLD FIEF, YOU'LL LIKELY--
I KNOW WHERE HE IS.
...
IT WAS MY DUTY TO DO SO.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
OR RATHER THAN SAYING I KNOW...
...I SHOULD SAY I ARRANGED FOR THE MANOR IN WHICH HE NOW LIVES, WITHOUT HIS KNOWING.

TRAITOR THAT I AM, I CANNOT POSSIBLY INHERIT THE KUZE HOUSE.
ALL OF THIS IS MY FAULT.
...IT RUNS COUNTER TO THE DESIRES OF MASTER AKIHITO.
EVEN IF...
WHAP
I SIMPLY DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU INSTALLED AS THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA, TOMOYUKI.
Y...
YES!
KLATTER
HIRO-YUKI.
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
...

HOWEVER, CRITICIZING HIS CUNNING AT THIS STAGE WILL CHANGE NOTHING.
WITH NO HOUSE OR STATUS, HE HAS NO OTHER RESOURCE WITH WHICH TO LIVE.
SUCH A VEXING PERSONALITY...
HE KNOWS NO LIMITS.
HE TRIES TO MAKE OTHERS MOVE TO HIS WILL.
NOTHING...
BROTHER?
WILL EVERYTHING REALLY GO AS YOU EXPECT IT TO?
BUT...
IT LOOKS AS THOUGH HE'S JUST TOYING WITH YOU.
DOESN'T VISCOUNT AKIHITO TEND TO MOVE OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF YOUR STRATEGIES?
IN FACT...
THERE'S DANGER SOMEHOW.

WHAT?
HE'S...
FOR A HOUSE, A SUCCESSOR IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING.
CONSIDERING THE WORST CASE...
...I HAD TO SECURE THE POSITION OF MASTER NAOTSUGU AS THE ILLEGITIMATE SON OF MY FORMER LORD'S FATHER.
AND HERE I THOUGHT MASTER NAOTSUGU WAS DOING A GOOD JOB OF HIDING HIMSELF.
BUT THAT'S FINE.
SEEING HIM LIKE THAT, WITH HIS DEFENSES DOWN, I WAS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO THINK HE WAS BEGGING ME FOR HELP.
NOW I SEE THAT HE WAS MANIPULATING US ALL, LIKE MOVING PAWNS DURING A GAME OF GO.
IT WOULD BE A PROBLEM FOR ME IF HE WERE TO GO WHERE I COULD NOT SEE.



...
THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM.
BECAUSE MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE...
...I UNDERSTAND MASTER AKIHITO ONLY TOO WELL.

BROTHER.
YOUR EXCELLENCY! WE RECEIVED NEWS THAT HE HAS ALREADY ARRIVED–
TAKE HIM TO THE GUEST-HOUSE BY THE WEST GATE.
LISTEN TO ME! DO NOT LET SOEMON INTO THIS HOUSE!
JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
YOUR EXCEL-LENCY!
HURRY
HURRY
HURRY

KATSURAGI.
...
!

...
IT'S FINE.
AND EVEN IF AS A RESULT HE HATES ME...
THAT HE WOULD HAVE MISGIVINGS ABOUT MY BEHAVIOR.
I KNEW FROM THE START THAT MASTER AKIHITO WOULD BE CONFUSED BY MY SUDDEN CHANGE OF HEART...
YOU WERE ANGRY WHEN YOU REALIZED MY INTENTIONS.
IT'S FINE.
HE'LL UNDER-STAND AT ANY RATE.
WELL...
IT WOULD BE UNDER-STANDABLE IF YOU THOUGHT I HAD LEFT THIS PLACE.
DURING THAT TIME...
WITH THIS, I'VE MANAGED TO POSTPONE HIS PLANS FOR A FEW YEARS.
BROTHER.
...I'LL SET THE STAGE SO THAT MASTER AKIHITO WON'T BE ABLE TO REFUSE.

...
YOU'RE LATE.
JUST AS WE DISCUSSED, I REQUESTED THAT MASTER NAOTSUGU BE GRANTED THE TITLE.
TO ENSURE THAT HE DID NOT TRY TO VOID THE VERBAL AGREEMENT, I HAD HIM PUT HIS STAMP ON A WRITTEN CONTRACT. PLEASE LOOK IT OVER LATER
WHAT EXACTLY WERE YOU DOING?
THE VISCOUNT HASN'T COME YET.
IT'S THE FIRST TIME THOSE TWO HAVE MET, YES? IN WHICH CASE, A LITTLE TARDINESS CAN'T BE HELPED.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHERE IS MASTER AKIHITO?
HAS THE ANNOUNCE-MENT OF MASTER NAOTSUGU ALREADY BEEN MADE?
MASTER AKIHITO.
EVER SINCE I WAS YOUNG, YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ME ANYTHING.
IS IT BECAUSE YOU KNEW I WOULD FIGHT YOU?
TARDI-NESS?
NO, WHAT IF...

TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
...?
MAST-
...IS FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE FAMILY.
LOOK BEHIND YOU.
DESPITE THE FACT THAT I AM USING MASTER AKIHITO'S FEELINGS WHILE DOING THIS...
ALL OF IT...
IT'S NOT A PROBLEM IF MASTER AKIHITO IS NOT PRESENT.
FOR MASTER NAOTSUGU'S ANNOUNCEMENT, AS LONG AS YOU, THE HEAD OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE, AND HIS GUARDIAN ARE THERE, THINGS WILL GO SMOOTHLY.
TAK
AND ALL OF IT...
...IS FOR THE SAKE OF MASTER AKIHITO.
!

I THOUGHT ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS.
IT'S... THE TWO OF US AGAIN.
AND AT SOME POINT WHILE I WAS TALKING WITH MASTER NAOTSUGU, MY CONFUSION DISAP-PEARED.
I THOUGHT ...
...AND THOUGHT .
I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT ABOUT...
...NOTHING BUT HOW I WANTED TO MAKE YOU HAPPY.
ABOUT HOW IF I COULDN'T TALK TO YOU, I'D GIVE UP ON IT ALL RIGHT FROM THE START.

KATSURAGI.
MASTER NAOTSUGU HAS RETURNED HOME.
HE HAS WITHDRAWN FROM THE ARRANGEMENT.
WHAT?
WHAT DID MASTER AKIHITO SAY?
I ORDERED HIM TO.
AND NOW MASTER NAOTSUGU HAS BECOME SOMEONE UNCONNECTED TO THE KUZE HOUSE.
KATSURAGI...

憂鬱な朝

scene.26

KATSURAGI.
I'M STILL THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN.
IN WHICH CASE, I WILL FULFILL MY DUTIES TO THE END.
AND DURING MY TIME...
...I WILL END THE *CURRENT* KUZE HOUSE.

scene.25 END

WHAT IS MASTER AKIHITO SAYING?
WHAT DOES HE MEAN MASTER NAOTSUGU HAS WITH-DRAWN?
...
MASTER AKIHITO DOUBTED ME...
OR HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MERELY BE ADMONISHED AND THEN LEAVE.
BUT...
WHAT...

...
EXACTLY.
END THE KUZE HOUSE?

SO YOU CAN LOOK SHOCKED TOO, HM?
WHAT...
...ARE YOU SAY-ING?

TAKA-YUKI.
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU. WILL YOU HEAR ME OUT?
I DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD.

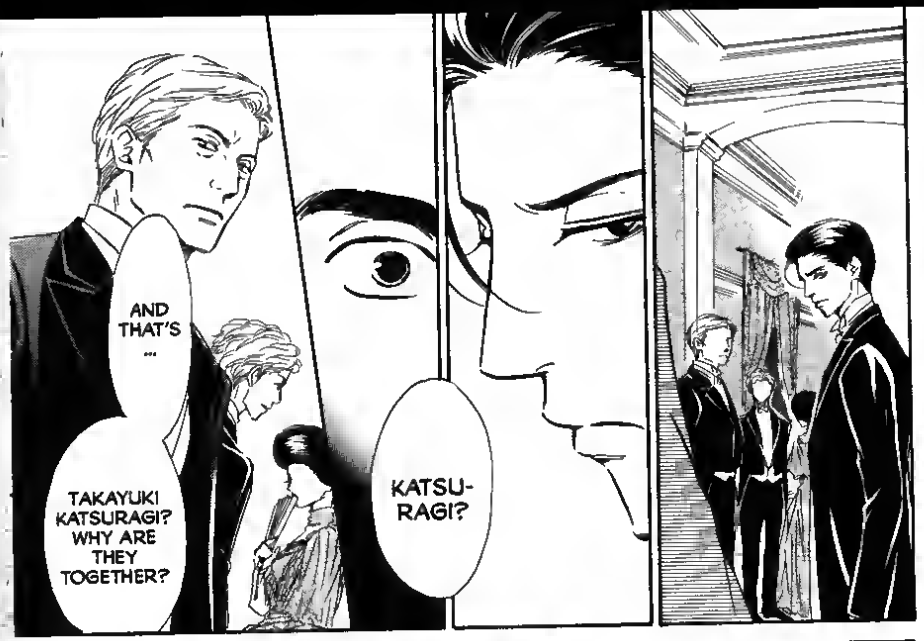
IMPOSSIBLE.
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
THERE'S NO WAY...
YES.
AT ANY RATE, WE'LL HEAD TOWARD THE KATSURAGI HOUSE.
HOWEVER, IS THIS REALLY TOMOYUKI'S PLAN?
MASTER NAOTSUGU?
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO WAY HE'D LET SUCH A FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITY SUCH AS RETURNING TO THE KUZE HOUSE SLIP AWAY.
...MASTER NAOTSUGU WOULD HAVE NEVER WITHDRAWN!
YOU'RE BEING DECEIVED, MASTER AKIHITO.
IT'S NOT POSSIBLE THAT MASTER NAOTSUGU DOES NOT SEEK YOUR TITLE!
...
WHAT DID HE SAY?
GRAB
DON'T SAY THAT.
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE DONE ABOUT SOMEONE WHO'S NO LONGER HERE.

FORGIVE MY RUDENESS FOR INTRUDING WHILE YOU WERE ENJOYING YOURSELF.
SOE-MON...
TAK
SHUT YOUR MOUTH!
MONEY DOES NOT BUBBLE UP FREELY FROM THE GROUND, YOU KNOW.
SIGH
THAT SAID, YOU CERTAINLY ARE A MAN WHO LIKES EVENING PARTIES.
ARE YOU AWARE OF HOW MUCH MONEY IS WASTED IN ONE NIGHT?
DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE-
WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
WHERE IS KATSURAGI?

HIRO-YUKI.
I SEE.
BUT...
NO NEED TO WORRY. THIS WON'T CAUSE ANY PROBLEMS FOR THE KATSURAGI MAIN FAMILY.
KLAK
IT'S JUST THAT THIS IS DIFFERENT THAN WHAT I HEARD FROM TOMOYUKI.
IS THERE A PROBLEM?
KLAK
AND HIS PERSONALITY AS WELL. THE FRESHNESS OF HIS VIEWS IS UNIQUE.
HIS FACE RESEMBLES THAT OF HIS PREDECESSOR, BUT HIS MIND IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.
MASTER AKIHITO IS A MAN OF GOOD CHARACTER.
...?
IF THE BLOOD OF THE KUZE MAIN FAMILY WERE TO CEASE...
...IT WOULD MOST CERTAINLY BE DUE TO THE OBSTINACY OF THE VISCOUNT'S PREDECESSOR
ALWAYS FIXATED ON DIRECT LINEAGE. HE TREATED US AS MERE RETAINERS.
COMPAR-ATIVELY, THE FORMER VISCOUNT WAS A PERSON OF THE OLD WORLD.

...TO GO INSIDE...
TAK
CHATTER
HEHEH
ISHIZAKI?!
GULP
I'M JUST GONNA GO RIGHT BACK TO FATHER-
THIS IS BAD...
THIS IS CLEARLY NOT A PLACE I SHOULD BE.
AND IN THIS OUTFIT TO BOOT.

YOU...
YOU, A MERE COMMONER?!
I ORDERED YOU NOT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE KUZE HOUSE!
DO YOU INTEND TO IGNORE ME?!
JUST WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE IS THAT? PAWN?
HE'S OUR HEAD CLERK.
YOU'RE ANOTHER OF KATSURAGI'S PAWNS?! ARE YOU MOVING ACCORDING TO HIS INTENTIONS?!
KATSURAGI?!
SNAP
ARE...
WHAT KIND OF ORDER COULD THE INCOMPARABLE MARQUISE MORIYAMA POSSIBLY GIVE TO A MERE HUMBLE MERCHANT-
HA
YOU HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA.
FATHER.
IT'S ONE THING TO GET OUT OF THE CARRIAGE, BUT..
THIS IS HARD TO WATCH.
...
AAH
AAH
ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME?!
YOUR EXCELLENCY!
PLEASE STOP!
EVERYONE IS WATCHING!


AND THAT'S ...
TAKAYUKI KATSURAGI? WHY ARE THEY TOGETHER?
KATSU-RAGI?

IT HASN'T EVEN BEEN A DAY SINCE YOU AND I LEFT THE ACADEMY, YOU KNOW?
IN THAT TIME, WHAT-
HEY, KUZE, EXPLAIN THIS. JUST WHAT IS GOING ON?
GRAB
MASTER SOICHIRO.

ISHIZAKI.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
KUZE!

?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
OF COURSE I AM
YOU'RE IN PROPER EVENING DRESS AND EVERY-THING...
I MEAN, I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU...
OH... MY FATHER IS...

BROTHER ...
TOMOYUKI, YOU HOLD YOUR TONGUE AND ACCOMPANY VISCOUNT KUZE.
IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, I WILL HEAR THEM.
...THIS TIME AT LEAST, I WILL OBEY YOUR WORDS.
OR RATHER, I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY.
AS LONG AS YOU ARE THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
...
THANK YOU.
TAKA-YUKI.
YOU DO STIR THINGS UP.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU SAID WHAT YOU WANTED TO SAY OR IF EVERYTHING WENT ACCORDING TO PLAN, BUT...

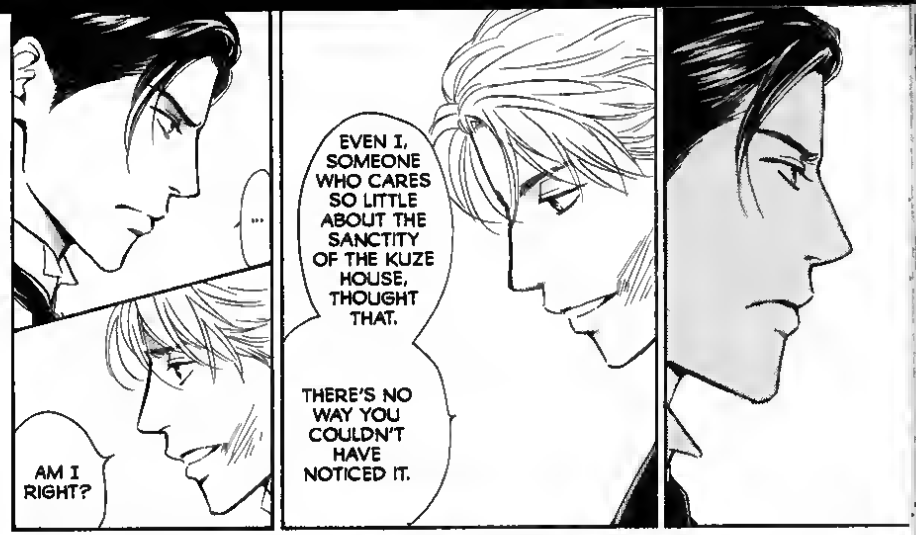
HE TOLD ME TO COME WITH HIM, SO THAT'S WHAT I DID.
ALL RIGHT?
HE IS.
H...
?
K-KATSU-RAGI!
!
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
IS YOUR FATHER WITH YOU?
WHAT?
...
MASTER SOICHIRO.
HE'S CLEARLY DIFFERENT FROM USUAL...
WHAT IS THIS TURBULENT ATMOSPHERE?
KUZE SEEMS MORE CALM THAN HE USUALLY DOES, BUT KATSURAGI...

TOMOYUKI!
PLEASE WAIT, MASTER AKIHITO-
TAK
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU OPENED YOUR EYES...
...TO THE FACT THAT VISCOUNT KUZE IS NOT A PAWN WHO WILL MOVE JUST AS YOU ENVISION.
AS LONG AS YOU CALL YOURSELF BY THE KATSURAGI NAME...
...OBEY THE HEAD OF YOUR HOUSE.
PAT
...
KATSU-RAGI-
MASTER SOICHIRO.
THIS WAY.

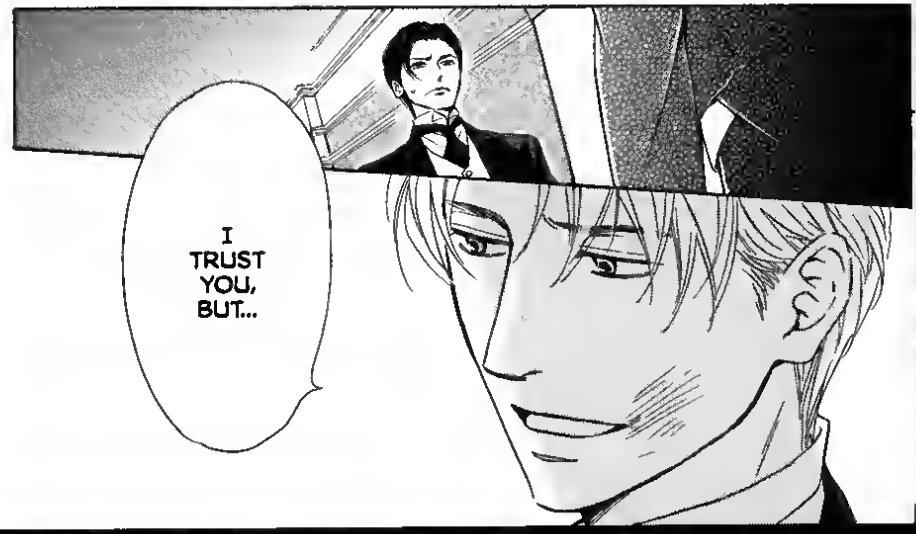
WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY YOU WILL END THE CURRENT KUZE HOUSE?
HE IS NOT SUITABLE FOR THE KUZE HOUSE.
...
ONCE I SPOKE WITH MASTER NAOTSUGU, I SOON REALIZED THE TRUTH.

...
WHAT KIND OF DEAL DID YOU MAKE WITH MASTER NAOTSUGU?

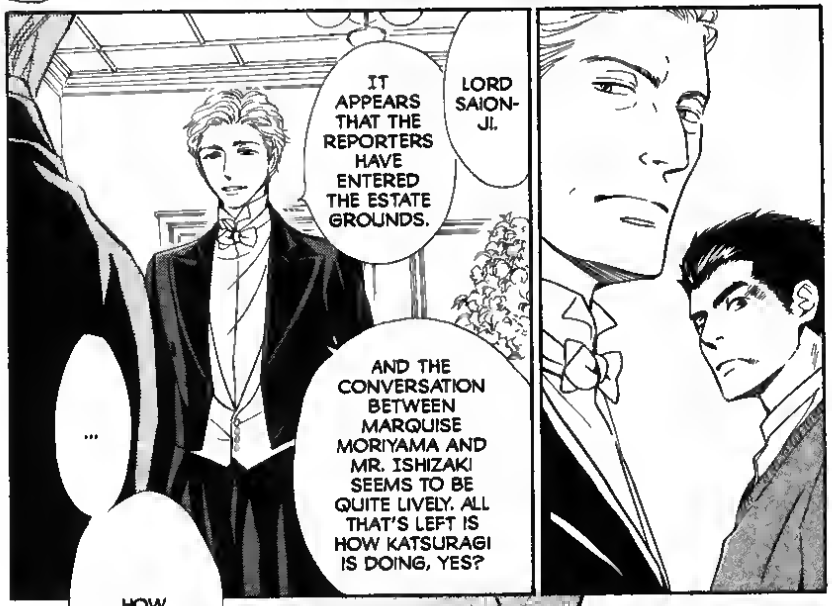
I KNOW ONLY TOO WELL THAT YOU'D EASILY LIE FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR OBJECTIVE.


...
AM I RIGHT?
EVEN I, SOMEONE WHO CARES SO LITTLE ABOUT THE SANCTITY OF THE KUZE HOUSE, THOUGHT THAT.
THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULDN'T HAVE NOTICED IT.

THERE'S SIMPLY NO WAY YOU WOULD HAND OVER YOUR PRECIOUS KUZE HOUSE TO A MAN LIKE THAT.
YOU HAVE NO GOOD WILL TOWARDS MASTER NAOTSUGU.
I UNDER-STOOD IT SO CLEARLY FROM YOUR ATTITUDE EARLIER, MORE THAN ANYTHING.


I TRUST YOU, BUT...

PRESIDENT KATSURAGI.
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW THAT I DID NOT LOSE!
YOU DON'T NEED TO GET SO SERIOUS ABOUT IT.
KLATTER
YOUR ARMS LOOK QUITE STRONG, AND YET-
STRANGE. YOU'RE THE MORE PHYSICALLY FIT OF THE TWO, MASTER SOICHIRO.


LORD SAION-JI.
IT APPEARS THAT THE REPORTERS HAVE ENTERED THE ESTATE GROUNDS.
AND THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN MARQUISE MORIYAMA AND MR. ISHIZAKI SEEMS TO BE QUITE LIVELY. ALL THAT'S LEFT IS HOW KATSURAGI IS DOING, YES?
...
HOW INDEED.

...
WHAT IS IT?
STARE
OH...
GRIN
I UNDERSTAND NOW THE REASON FOR THE SCRATCHES ON VISCOUNT KUZE'S FACE.
QUITE TROUBLESOME ON SUCH AN IMPORTANT DAY.
SO? WHO ENDED UP THE WINNER?
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

AND MY FATHER SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT AS WELL.
THAT'S TRUE.
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT.
THAT WE OWED A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE KUZE HOUSE?!
YOU SAID THAT YOU PUT ME IN THAT ACADEMY FILLED WITH NOBILITY SO THAT I COULD BECOME CLOSE WITH AKIHITO KUZE, DIDN'T YOU?!
...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF DEBT HE OWES THEM, BUT FATHER CAN'T SIMPLY WALK AWAY FROM A MEMBER OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT HE HAS KATSURAGI.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, HE'LL PROTECT KUZE.
IN WHICH CASE, RATHER THAN BEING ANXIOUS ABOUT THESE BITS AND PIECES I KNOW ABOUT, I SHOULD JUST LEAVE IT TO HIM.

IF YOU'RE REFERRING TO KATSURAGI'S ERROR EARLIER, YOU HAVE NO NEED TO WORRY.
IN THE END...
THE PAWNS HE MOVES ARE OF A PRIVILEGED CLASS. HE UNDERSTANDS THIS TOO KEENLY WITH AN EGOTISTICAL PERSON SUCH AS MARQUISE MORIYAMA, BUT...
I DO THINK THAT TOMOYUKI'S SCHEME IS QUITE CLEVER, BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW IT WILL PLAY OUT IN UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES.
IT'S ONLY WITH REGARD TO VISCOUNT AKIHITO. HE IS...SPECIAL.
...

HE'S ALWAYS SAYING HE NEEDS TO MAKE CONNECTIONS IN GOVERNMENT TO STIMULATE BUSINESS IN HIS OLD FIEF.
I DIDN'T KNOW IT...
...BUT HE'S BEEN FULFILLING HIS ROLE AS HEAD OF HIS HOUSE ALL THIS TIME.
LATELY... YOU'RE JUST LIKE "THAT BORING LOT."
THAT BUTLER'S TOTALLY POISONED YOU.
KLATTER
I WISH I COULD TAKE IT BACK!
I CAN'T BELIEVE I SAID THAT!
...
TAKAYUKI KATSURAGI.

WHEN IT COMES TO KATSURAGI'S ATTACHMENT TO KUZE...
WELL, EITHER WAY, HE'S GOT HIS EYE ON THINGS TEN YEARS DOWN THE LINE.
WHAT WILL I EVEN BE DOING TEN YEARS FROM NOW?
I WAS SURPRISED AT KUZE IN THERE.
BUT...
...IS ONLY BECAUSE HE'S DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER NOBLES.
HE HAS EVEN MORE DOUBTS THAN I DO ABOUT THE CLASS SYSTEM. HE'S QUICK TO REJECT IT AS STUPID.
KLATTER
MY BEING ABLE TO BE FRIENDS WITH KUZE...
HIS BEARING IN THAT EVENING DRESS... HE WAS A TOTAL MASTER.
YOU WOULDN'T THINK WE'RE THE SAME AGE.

TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
...
HE'S ANGRY ...

I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER MY SINCEREST APOLOGIES FOR EARLIER.
I WON'T CAUSE YOU ANY TROUBLE.
IF POSSIBLE, I'D LIKE FOR YOU TO PLEASE TELL ME WHAT KATSURAGI IS THINKING AND WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THAT HOUSE.
...

I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT YET.
I HAVEN'T COLLECTED MY THOUGHTS YET EITHER-
TAK
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T ACT ACCORDING TO YOUR PLANS.
I'LL SPEAK TO MASTER NAOTSUGU LATER.
WHY?
TAK
YES, HE'S ANGRY...
SIGH
ALL RIGHT...
MASTER AKIHITO!
GRAB
UNDER-STAND THAT I...
...AM ONLY HERE TO CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR ACTIONS.

SAY, KATSU-RAGI.
I THINK I SAID THIS BEFORE TOO, BUT...
...WILL YOU STOP WALKING BEHIND ME?
I WANT US TO TALK SIDE BY SIDE, AT LEAST WHEN IT'S JUST THE TWO OF US.

BUT IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN SELF-SATIS-FACTION.
IF YOU MUST HAVE IT THAT WAY...
...FEEL FREE TO ORDER ME TO DO IT.
YOU'VE ALWAYS...
...BEEN EXTREMELY PARTICULAR ABOUT ME WALKING ALONGSIDE YOU.

YOU NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT IT ANY LONGER.
WE CAME TO AN AGREEMENT. I WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO EXACT RETRIBUTION ON YOU.
...
YOU FEARED THE ANGER OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
SQUEEZE
KATSU-RA-
WHICH IS WHY...

SETTING MASTER NAOTSUGU UP AS HEAD OF THE HOUSE WAS ONLY FOR A FEW YEARS.
A FEW YEARS FOR YOU TO COMPLETELY RECOVER FROM THE "ILLNESS" I HAVE BEEN WHISPERING ABOUT INTO APPROPRIATE EARS-
MASTER NAOTSUGU WAS NECESSARY TO PROTECT THEM BOTH.
THE REPU-TATION OF THE KUZE HOUSE AND YOUR POSITION ...
AND YOU SELFISHLY-
KATSU-RAGI...
WHY DO YOU NOT JUST DO AS I TELL YOU?

...
KATSU-RA-
CHATTER
!
KATSURAGI!
GRAB
...I'M BEGGING YOU! PLEASE DO NOT INTERFERE WITH ME EVER AGAIN!
HUFF

STOP...
NGH ...
PUSH
NN ...
NGH!

SLAM
BANG
KA-CHAK
TAK

...
KATSURAGI...
WHAT ARE YOU...!

...
KATSURAGI.
YOU TWO ARE A MASS OF CONTRADICTIONS.
AH...
HAA...
MM!
HAA...
...
MASTER AKIHITO.

THERE'S A DISCONNECT BETWEEN WHAT YOU SAY AND WHAT YOU DO.
KATSU-RAGI...
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING NOW?

YOU MOVE FORWARD ON THINGS WITHOUT TALKING TO ME.
AND YOU LIE, TELLING ME IT'S FOR MY SAKE.
BUT I KNOW THAT THOSE WORDS THEN WERE YOUR TRUE FEELINGS.
YOUR *TRUE* FEELINGS. AND YOU FINALLY LET ME HEAR THEM.

WE... THIS ISN'T THE TIME OR THE PLACE FOR THIS, I KNOW.
...
YOU SAID... THE WORDS I'D WANTED TO HEAR FOR SO LONG.
..
BEFORE WE CAME HERE, YOU...
...SAID YOU'D ANSWER TO MY FEELINGS, DIDN'T YOU?

KATSU-
RAGI.

KLIK

WE SHOULD HURRY BACK TO MR. ISHIZAKI.
NO DOUBT WE'RE KEEPING HIM WAITING

KATSURAGI.
WITH THOSE WORDS ALONE, I CAN DO ANYTHING.

I WANT TO REPAY YOU. YOU'VE DONE ALL THIS FOR ME.
WHICH IS WHY, THIS TIME...

...I WANT YOU TO TRUST ME.
WITH THE KUZE HOUSE, WITH THE FUTURE...

...
FINE WE'RE OUT OF TIME. I'LL GO AHEAD.
I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN LATER.
...
IS IT THAT STRANGE TO BE SO FIXATED ON STANDING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER?
I SAID THAT I WANTED TO GO TOGETHER. DIDN'T I?

...
I WILL BE WITH YOU...
...MY WHOLE LIFE.
PLEASE GO ON AHEAD OF ME.
I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU SOON.
EVEN SO..
I WANT TO CONTINUE TO ANSWER YOUR FEELINGS.
YOU LIKE THIS KIND OF THING.

Blue Morning: Scene 27

...

HOW COULD MASTER AKIHITO UNDERSTAND MY FEELINGS?

IT'S NOT THAT I CAN'T STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH HIM.

IT'S THAT...

...I'M AFRAID TO.

scene.26END

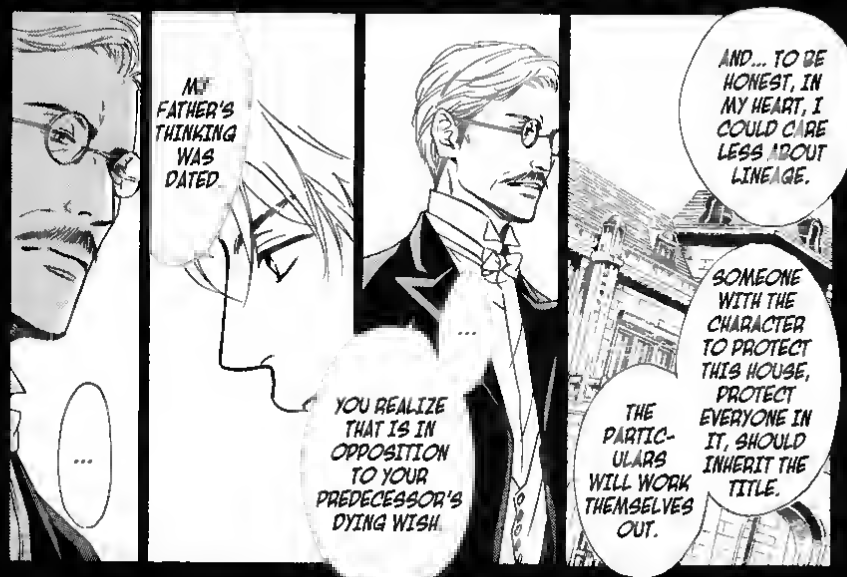
MASTER AKIHITO.
THE REASON YOU ARE CONSIDERING YOUR RETIREMENT IS SO THAT YOU MAY CEDE TO YOUR BUTLER, TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI.
IS THAT THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER?
THAT'S EXACTLY IT.
AND THERE IS NO ONE MORE SUITABLE TO BECOME HEAD OF THE HOUSE THAN HE?
MY FATHER ORIGINALLY WELCOMED KATSURAGI TO THE KUZE HOUSE SO HE WOULD INHERIT HIS POSITION.
UNLIKE KATSURAGI, I HAVE RECEIVED NO TEACHINGS WHATSOEVER FROM MY FATHER.
MASTER NAOTSUGU, YOU SAID THAT YOU YOURSELF ARE NOT SUITABLE TO BE THE HEAD OF A HOUSE.
BUT KATSURAGI IS DIFFERENT. THE EXISTENCE OF THE KUZE HOUSE NOW IS SOLELY THE RESULT OF KATSURAGI'S LABORS. HE HAS THIS KIND OF CAPABILITY.
...
WOULD YOU SAY THAT EVEN IF YOU KNEW HE DID NOT HAVE THE KUZE BLOOD IN HIS VEINS?

I CAME HERE TO THE MORIYAMA ESTATE THIS EVENING...
...BECAUSE I HAVE A FAVOR...
...I WOULD ASK YOU TO GRANT ABOVE ALL ELSE, MASTER AKIHITO.
...
A FAVOR FROM ME?
PRECISELY.
BUT BEFORE I DO SO...
...I WISH TO CONFIRM WHAT KIND OF GENTLEMAN YOU ARE AND IF YOU ARE A HEAD OF HOUSE SUITABLE TO INHERIT.
...?

MASTER AKIHITO.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF TRICKS KATSURAGI PLAYED TO BRING ME HERE, BUT...
...AS I STATED PREVIOUSLY, I HAVE NO DESIRE TO BE OUT IN THE WORLD.
I AM MORE SUITED TO LIVING QUIETLY IN THE COUNTRY.

THERE I HAVE A KIND WOMAN WHO TAKES GOOD CARE OF ME.
THE DAUGHTER OF MY HEAD PHYSICIAN.
SHE IS A CHEERFUL WOMAN.
...

PLEASE SPEAK CAREFULLY.
IT IS A FACT BEYOND DOUBT THAT HIS MOTHER WAS MY GRANDFATHER'S CONCUBINE.
AS LONG AS HER NAME IS LISTED IN THE CONCUBINE REGISTRY, TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI IS THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF MY PREDECESSOR'S PREDECESSOR.


AND... TO BE HONEST, IN MY HEART, I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT LINEAGE.
SOMEONE WITH THE CHARACTER TO PROTECT THIS HOUSE, PROTECT EVERYONE IN IT, SHOULD INHERIT THE TITLE.
THE PARTICULARS WILL WORK THEMSELVES OUT.
...
YOU REALIZE THAT IS IN OPPOSITION TO YOUR PREDECESSOR'S DYING WISH.
MY FATHER'S THINKING WAS DATED.
...

MASTER AKIHITO.
MY ILLNESS IS MORE SERIOUS THAN IT MAY APPEAR.
I BELIEVE THAT THIS WILL ALSO BE THE LAST TIME YOU AND I MEET.
VISCOUNT KUZE.

I WONDER, MASTER AKIHITO...
...IF YOU ALSO HAVE SOMEONE YOU CHERISH IN THIS WAY?
...
I DO.
...
I WANT TO LIVE FOR THAT PERSON
I...
IN THAT CASE, I BELIEVE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND MY REQUEST.
EXCELLENT.
...
...

TAK
TAK
TAK
WHAT MASTER NAOTSUGU ASKED OF ME EARLIER...
I CAN'T TELL KATSURAGI YET.
IF I TELL HIM, HE'LL NO DOUBT OPPOSE ME AND GET IN THE WAY.
KLATTER
I WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO CONSIDER THIS MY DYING REQUEST.
LEND YOUR ASSISTANCE TO THOSE I LEAVE BEHIND.
PLEASE.
EXTEND YOUR PATRONAGE TO MY SON...

I UNDERSTAND THE REASON.
NEITHER OF US...
...CAN EVER SEE OR SUPPORT THE OTHER'S WAY OF THINKING.
EVERYTHING KATSURAGI DOES IS "FOR ME."
THEN I SAY NOTHING AND MOVE "FOR HIM."
WE DON'T TALK. WE NEVER SEEM TO MESH.
WE CAN'T BRIDGE THIS GAP.
WE'RE ALWAYS LIKE THIS.

WHY DO YOU NOT JUST DO AS I TELL YOU?
PLEASE DO NOT INTERFERE WITH ME EVER AGAIN!
HE WAS DESPERATE ...
TO UNDERMINE MY PLAN, HE SET UP THIS POSITION...
...KEPT IT QUIET AND CARRIED IT ALL BY HIMSELF.
HE'S ALWAYS DONE THIS.
KATSURAGI ABSOLUTELY NEVER CONSIDERS LETTING ME TAKE THE INITIATIVE.

YOU DO WANT TO UNILATERALLY ANNOUNCE YOUR DIVORCE AND EMBARRASS MARQUISE MORIYAMA, DON'T YOU?
YOU WON'T GET A SECOND CHANCE TO STAND ALONGSIDE HIS EXCELLENCY IN FRONT OF REPORTERS.
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
...
THAT WAS AN ACT.
FOR ALL THE HARDSHIP, YOU ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE ENJOYING YOURSELF.
YOU'VE NEVER ONCE THOUGHT OF MY TRUE FEELINGS, HAVE YOU?
SNAP
I KNOW.
I HAD DECIDED TO WAIT UNTIL TAKAKO'S POSITION WAS SECURE IN HER NEW FAMILY.
DESPITE HOW HARD IT'S BEEN, I HAVE ENDURED.

WE SLAM UP AGAINST OUR OWN WILLFULNESS. WE NEVER TRY TO LISTEN TO THE OTHER'S VOICE.
KATSURAGI.
ALL OF THEM ARE FROM NEWSPAPERS WITH SOME CLOUT AND ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL.
IF YOU DON'T HURRY, THE REPORTERS WILL LEAVE.
I COULD SAY THE SAME TO YOU.
MADAM KAYOKO.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?

KATSU-
RAGI.

PLEASE HURRY AND PACK YOUR THINGS AS WELL.
THEN GO TO THE ENTRY HALL WHERE THE REPORT-ERS ARE WAITING.
I'VE ENTRUSTED AMAMIYA WITH ALL THE DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS, SO YOU CAN REST EASY ON THAT.

...
AT THE PARTY EARLIER...

WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?

YOU MAY HAVE THOUGHT ME CONTENT, BUT I HAVE STRUGGLED MORE THAN YOU KNOW.
MORIYAMA WANTED MONEY FROM MY FAMILY. MY FATHER WANTED A CONNECTION WITH MORIYAMA.
AND NOW THE HEIR TO THIS HOUSE IS THE CHILD OF A MISTRESS...

...I GREATLY ENJOYED SPENDING TIME WITH YOU.
I SUPPOSE YOU WERE ORDERED BY MORIYAMA TO KEEP ME HAPPY, BUT...

YES!
THAT'S VERY IMPOR-TANT.
THANK YOU!

...
YOU'VE ALSO BUILT UP YOUR ASSETS.

YOU SAVED ME.
YOU GAVE ME THE RESOLVE TO LIVE MY LIFE ALONE.

ALTHOUGH MARQUISE MORIYAMA IS GETTING ANGRY BY HIMSELF
THAT'S A SURPRISE. THEY'RE ACTUALLY TALKING TO EACH OTHER.
HOW DID THEY GET ANYONE TO LET THEM IN?
AND SO MANY REPORTERS HAVE ENTERED THE GROUNDS...
YELL
YELL
CHATTER
CHATTER
MASTER AKIHITO.
PLEASE STAND WITH MASTER NAOTSUGU IN FRONT OF THE REPORTERS.
...
THUD

...MASTER AKIHITO TOLD ME SOMETHING.
HE SAID HE WANTED TO BE YOUR EQUAL. HE WANTED TO WALK SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH YOU.
I SUPPOSE HE STILL FEELS THE SAME, EVEN NOW.
AND YOU, KATSURAGI?
...
I WONDER HOW YOU WANT THINGS TO BE WITH MASTER AKIHITO?
MARQUISE MORIYAMA AND...
...SOEMON ISHIZAKI.

AFTER THE NEWS GOES OUT THAT THE EXTREMELY WEALTHY MERCHANTS, THE ISHIZAKIS, ARE THE PATRONS OF THE KUZE HOUSE...
...HIS EXCELLENCY THE MARQUISE WILL BE FORCED TO REMOVE HIS HANDS FROM ALL KUZE AFFAIRS.
...YOU WILL MAKE THIS MATTER PUBLIC THIS EVENING.
IN ANY CASE...
...THAT YOU PLAN TO JOIN WITH THE ISHIZAKIS TO BUILD A LIMITED PARTNER-SHIP.
THE RAILWAY ENTERPRISE YOU RECOM-MENDED?
AND SECOND ...
FIRST, THAT YOU ARE PLANNING TO RETIRE TO SEEK TREATMENT FOR YOUR ILLNESS.
YOUR SUCCESSOR WILL BE THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF YOUR PREDECESSOR'S PREDECESSOR, MASTER NAOTSUGU.
THE HEAD OF THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE WILL COME LATER TO MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S.
AT THAT TIME, PLEASE MAKE PUBLIC TWO THINGS.
...
AND SO THE GUARDIAN WHO HAS "BEEN SO KIND" AS TO CARE FOR A "MERE" VISCOUNTCY ALL THESE YEARS SHALL BE CIRCUM-VENTED.
IT WILL BE A TOTAL LOSS OF FACE FOR MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
EXCEPT FOR THE PART WHERE I SELFISHLY SENT MASTER NAOTSUGU AWAY...
...THIS IS BASICALLY GOING AS KATSURAGI HAD PLANNED.
PLEASE VISIT MR. NAKAJIMA IN KABUTO-CHO.
THE MONEY IS THERE.
WHAT?
I CAN'T ANNOUNCE THAT YET. OUR INVESTMENT IS STILL NOT ENOUGH—
...I CONVERTED INTO CASH ALL THE STOCKS I HAD PROCURED, THINKING YOU MIGHT HAVE EXPENSES TO MEET.
AROUND THE TIME YOU WERE MOVING FORWARD WITH THE ENGAGE-MENT...
HE IS A BROKER I RETAINED.

THAT IS THE ROOT OF EVERYTHING
AN INEXPERIENCED NOVICE, NEVER HAVING DONE A SINGLE THING WITH HIS OWN HANDS.
NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF FACADE I PUT UP..
...SEEN FROM THE OUTSIDE, I'M STILL UNDER KATSURAGI'S CARE.
NOTHING WILL HAPPEN IF THINGS REMAIN AS THEY ARE.
WHICH IS WHY KATSURAGI TRIES SO FIERCELY TO PROTECT ME.
ALL I HAVE IS MY NAME AND MY STATUS.
...
FSH
WE WILL NEVER GET TO A PLACE WHERE WE LISTEN TO EACH OTHER'S VOICES..
UNLESS I MOVE AWAY FROM KATSURAGI AND USE ONLY MY OWN POWER...
...UNLESS I CHANGE.

THE DIFFERENCE IS CLEAR.
UNTIL NOW, I'VE HAD NO POWER...
THE MONEY ISSUE IS, OF COURSE, IN LARGE PART DUE TO HIS ROLE IN THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE.
THE COOPERATION OF THE ISHIZAKIS IS ENTIRELY DUE TO KATSURAGI'S POWER.
CHATTER
CHATTER
MASTER AKIHITO.
YOU'RE STILL JUST A CHILD, AFTER ALL.
IF THE KUZE NAME IS TAKEN FROM YOU, WHAT REMAINS?
...
A CHILD, HM?

THIS IS RIGHT, ISN'T IT?
KATSURAGI...
I MUST...
...GROW MORE, MOVE FURTHER FORWARD...
...SO THAT SOMEDAY I CAN CATCH UP TO KATSURAGI AND STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH HIM.
SO THAT WE CAN WALK TOGETHER FROM NOW ON.
EVERYONE. I'M SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING.

COOL YOUR HEAD FIRST.
YOU TWO CAN TALK IT OUT LATER.
GIVE IT A LITTLE TIME.
MAYBE GET AWAY FROM TOKYO FOR A BIT.
EITHER WAY...

...IF YOU LOVE KUZE...
...DON'T RUN AWAY. STAND AND FACE HIM HONESTLY.
FWP

KATSURAGI.

I'M RETURNING TO THE ISHIZAKI MAIN HOUSE.
BECAUSE I AM THE ISHIZAKI HEAD CLERK.
...
KATSU-RAGI.
SIGH
...
MASTER SOICHIRO.
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING? ARE YOU JUST GOING TO LEAVE EVERYTHING TO KUZE BY HIMSELF?
HE'S STRONGER WITH YOU BY HIS SIDE.

ACHING WITH MY OWN POWER-LESSNESS EACH TIME HE CHASES ME, EACH TIMES HE PASSES ME.
EASILY BURDENED WITH SUCH TRIVIAL PREJUDICES.
I HAD NO IDEA.
TAK
AND...

I HAD NO IDEA...

MADAM KAYOKO, MASTER SOICHIRO, THEY ONLY DO AS THEY PLEASE...

...I WAS THIS BRITTLE AND WEAK.

I HAD NO IDEA. NOT A ONE.

Scene 27 END

I LOVE YOU.

...

...TO DISCOVER THAT BY LOVING MASTER AKIHITO...

...BY TELLING HIM THAT I LOVE HIM...

...I WOULD END UP LOOKING THIS FOOLISH AND PATHETIC.

I...

THIS IS THE FIFTH VOLUME. ARRIVING AT THE FIFTH BOOK, I CAN FINALLY SEE THE END AND I BREATHE A SIGH OF RELIEF. I KNEW FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THERE WOULD BE EXTREMELY LITTLE IN THE WAY OF LOVE IN THIS VOLUME (NATURALLY, NO BEDROOM SCENES EITHER) (AND YET, THE BOOK IS STILL THIS THICK. SORRY...) (ON AND ON AT THE MORIYAMA ESTATE...), SO FOR EACH CHAPTER, I HAD THEM FLIRTING FOR NO REASON FOR THE FRONTISPIECES AT LEAST. FOR THE NEXT VOLUME, I WANT TO DO SOMETHING WITH THESE TWO, NOT JUST FOR THE FRONTISPIECES, BUT IN THE MAIN STORY TOO! SO I'D BE DELIGHTED IF YOU'D ALSO READ THE NEXT VOLUME. SEE YOU THEN!

JULY 2014
SHOKO HIDAKA

THIS TIME, I REALLY DID GIVE SO MANY PEOPLE SO MUCH TROUBLE. ESPECIALLY MY EDITOR... NEXT TIME, I'LL DO BETTER - SOMEHOW...

"It's Volume 5, and the whole thing is an evening party!"

About the Author

Shoko Hidaka's works have been published in English, French and German. Her previously published English-language releases include *Resort* and *Not Enough Time*. Born on March 31st in Tokyo, she's an Aries with blood type A.